

SEAMEN AND THE LAW: AN EXAMINATION OF
THE IMPACT OF LEGISLATION ON THE BRITISH
MERCHANT SEAMAN'S LOT, 1588-1918

A PhD thesis submitted

by

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ABSTRACT

The aims of this study were to determine the general outline over three centuries of variations in the sailors' lot; to establish the linkage with the legislative process, and to ascertain what part Parliament, the unions and the executive had played in making and interpreting the law. It was found that the years 1838-51, 1867-83 and 1905-18 were periods when significant advance occurred, with the earlier and intervening years forming plateaux where little change took place. The legal provision in respect of seamen was of three types - Admiralty-inspired, trade-enhancing and reformist - with the first two categories predominating. The Admiralty consistently attempted to treat merchant seamen as a secondary source of manpower down to the end of the nineteenth-century, while trade interests sought to have the men subject to strict disciplinary requirements and subscribe to a state-supervised contract of employment that stabilised variable costs. Unions were unable to influence the legislative process to any great extent because they had little real power until the large steam vessel provided a background to employment similar to that in large units of enterprise ashore, while the Board of Trade was dominated by anti-interventionists until 1890 and only slowly moved in support of the reformers. The arguments of Keir and MacDonagh that the Board was an example of dynamic expansion in executive capacity are refuted, with the Parris thesis that it responded to changes in society seeming more correct. Seamen were

the most legislated-for body of workers, but voluminous legislation often failed to touch upon essentials. The Thornton argument of a delayed industrial revolution at sea is developed by suggesting that the lag in the exploitation of the steam-propelled vessel, in successful unionisation of the workforce and in improving the condition of merchant seamen can all be put at about twenty-five years, so that the retardation of the shipping industry vis-a-vis industry ashore may be fixed at about a quarter of a century. Tight legislation, designed to strengthen national defence capability and expand trade, created instead a corset of regulation that merely restricted national growth.

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NOTE ON FOOTNOTES, REFERENCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

General guidance to the form and content of footnotes has been obtained from British Standards Institution publications Copy preparation and proof correction (BS 5261), parts one and two, Bibliographical references (BS 1629) and Abbreviations of titles of periodicals (BS 4148). Hart's rules for compositors and readers at the University Press Oxford and the Kate Turabian work A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations have been consulted on specific points of interpretation. In the interests of brevity and accuracy, the following general rules have been adopted.

Acts of Parliament

A full reference to a British Act of Parliament in the form of:

Great Britain, Laws, Statutes, etc.,
Coroner's Act, 1954, 2 & 3 Eliz. 2, ch. 31

is contracted to:

2 & 3 Eliz 2 c 31

in the footnote, provided that the text makes it abundantly clear what Act is referred to.

Parliamentary Debates

Great Britain, Parliament, Hansard's
Parliamentary Debates (Lords), 5th
series, vol. 58, col. 112

is contracted to:

Hansard 5 58 112

in the footnote, with a date either in the text or in the footnote. (For the numbering of Hansard series' see under the Abbreviations heading).

Parliamentary Reports

The full title and reference of a report is given in the footnote when it is first referred to in the text, as follows:

Report of the Select Committee on Shipwrecks, BPP 1836 (567) XVII 373,

and on all subsequent occasions the short form RSCS 1836 and a page number is used. The bibliography has a column-list of the short forms to assist the reader who loses track of the full title and reference of a particular report.

Parliamentary papers

Similarly, Parliamentary papers have a full reference when first quoted, followed by a shorter version. For example, the Wreck Return, 1869, BPP 1870 (300) LX 760 becomes BPP 1870 LX 760 thereafter. When there are a number of references to an important paper and it is desirable to use a descriptive form to assist the reader, this is accomplished by employing a short form as in the case of Parliamentary reports. Thus, the Report from A.G. Finlayson to the Right Honourable Henry Labouchère on the Merchant Seamen's Fund, BPP 1850 (178)

LIII 367 is referred to subsequently as Finlayson's Report 1850, and this short form is listed in the bibliography.

Pagination

Where reference is made to page numbers in volumes of Parliamentary papers or reports the following conventions apply:

- (1) A number in arabic numerals (456) refers to a volume page number.
- (2) A number in lower-case Roman (xi) indicates the page number of a report.
- (3) The letters Q. or QQ. followed by a number or numbers (Q.456 or QQ.456-457) mean that the reference is to numbered questions and answers in a volume of evidence.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been employed in the footnotes, appendices and bibliography.

AB	Able Seaman
BLRD	British Library (Reference Division)
BPP	British Parliamentary Papers
<u>CJ</u>	<u>Commons Journals</u>
<u>DNB</u>	<u>Dictionary of National Biography</u>
EIC	East India Company
<u>Hansard 1</u>	<u>Parliamentary Register to 1805</u>

Hansard 2 Cobbetts Parliamentary Debates and the
Hansard New Series, 1803-1830.

Hansard 3 Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 1830-1891

Hansard 4 Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 1891-1909

Hansard 5 Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, from 1909

HMSO Her Majesty's Stationery Office

ILO International Labour Organisation

IOL India Office Library

LJ Lord's Journals

MBSHS Minute Book of the Seamen's Hospital Society

MNAOA Merchant Navy and Airline Officer's Association

MP Member of Parliament

NMM National Maritime Museum

NUS National Union of Seamen

P & O Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company

PRO Public Record Office

SHS Seamen's Hospital Society

UK United Kingdom

US United States

CHAPTER ONE

THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK BEFORE 1800

State concern for the welfare of merchant seamen may fairly be said to spring from the repulse of the Spanish Armada in 1588, for at that turning point in British history it was the merchant seamen who provided the bulk of the sea defence forces. Apart from the large number pressed to serve in royal ships,¹ merchant seamen serving in merchant vessels out-numbered the crews of naval ships in a ratio of eleven to six, while there were 168 merchantmen employed to thirty-four royal vessels.² A census initiated by Elizabeth's energetic chief secretary in 1583³ had established that there were 16,255 men 'accustomed to the water' in England and Wales, and as 11,262 men manned the merchant ships massed to meet the Spanish threat it was apparent to contemporaries that merchant seamen had a vital role in times of war.⁴ State policy was consequently directed towards keeping

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1. See Ronald Pollitt 'Bureaucracy and the Armada: The Administrator's Battle' The Mariner's Mirror Vol. 60 No. 2 (1974) on the widespread impressment of merchant seamen in 1588.
 2. BLRD Add. MSS. Egerton 2541 1-4.
 3. William Cecil Burghley (1520-98), served Henry VIII as keeper of the writs in the Court of Common Pleas, Edward VI as master of requests, and was chief secretary to Elizabeth I for forty years.
 4. Figures taken from Sir William Clowes The Royal Navy (New York edition, 1966) i 439.

up their numbers, and phrases such as 'for the increase in mariners' and 'for the increase and encouragement of seamen' are common in the titles and preambles of Acts of Parliament passed in the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries. The welfare commitment first emerged some five years after the defeat of the Armada when a measure with the self-explanatory title of 'An Acte for necessarie Reliefe of Souldiers and Maryners' reached the statute book.¹ It made provision for payments to limbless or disabled men who could supply documentary proof of service and injury to substantiate a claim. Parishes with men in this category were to levy a rate, while payments were to be made by the county in which the soldier or sailor had been pressed, or where born, or where he had volunteered for service. The county treasurer was empowered to make regular quarterly payments in approved cases. That the system was widely abused cannot be doubted, for within four years there was passed 'An Acte against lewd and wandringe persons pretending themselves to be Souldiers or Mariners,'² with severe penalties for forging wound or discharge papers, while another enactment in the same session permitted the justices to increase parish rates for the purpose of relieving genuine cases.³ The final measure of this series went through in 1601, and it decreed that from

1. 35 Eliz c 4.

2. 39 & 40 Eliz c 17.

3. 39 & 40 Eliz c 21.

Easter 1602 every parish in England and Wales had to make a contribution for the maintenance of Armada veterans, while the treasurer in each county was to pay 'pencions' to the survivors.¹

In the field of civil law, the contractual basis of the seaman's engagement with his employer rested on an amalgam of verbal agreement, customary practice and English Common Law, with disputes being settled at Petty Sessions, Doctors' Commons or the Assizes by reference to precedents taken chiefly from the Laws of Oléron.² This code of practice embodied a concept that was to tinge a great deal of subsequent legislation, for the notion that 'freight is the mother of wages' meant that wages were contingent on the safe delivery of cargo so that disciplinary measures could be applied if seamen broached the cargo, neglected duty or left the ship without permission. Another concept was that masters and owners had a responsibility for sick and injured men, and in such cases a standard of care was prescribed.³

1. 43 & 44 Eliz c 3.

2. Also known as the Judgements of Oléron, this code of maritime conduct derived from Rhodian sea law of about 700 A.D. and was introduced into England in the 1190s. The earliest surviving copy is in the 'Liber Memorandum' of the City of London kept at the City of London Record Office. For a recent analysis of the impact of these laws see Timothy J. Runyan 'Mariners and the Law of the Sea in Later Medieval England' in Paul Adam (ed.) Seamen in Society - proceedings of the International Commission of Maritime History, Bucharest, 1980 - Part II, 1-8.

3. As summarised by C. Ernest Fayle A Short History of the World's Shipping Industry (1934 edition) 70.

However, customary law tends to be weak law, and until the eighteenth-century it was often necessary for an aggrieved seaman to pursue his claim through the Courts. A typical case was that of the crew of the Queen Cathrane who sued the owners of the ship for full wages in 1663 after having been stopped £3 each for allegedly being negligent in stowing cargo.¹ They won the day, but legal process is neither the most convenient nor the least expensive way of regulating contracts, and it will be shown later in this chapter that seamen's contracts were made subject to legislative control in the early eighteenth-century. In the seventeenth-century the state saw its merchant seamen as being virtually interchangeable with the fighting seamen of the Royal Navy, and the legislative emphasis was on maintaining the flow of recruits to sea service and ensuring that the fleet could be manned speedily in times of war. Interchangeability meant, in the (1957) assessment of Geoffrey Penn, that

nearly all sea officers (in royal service) were either amateurs who went to sea only from time to time, or professionals who spent the majority of their sea-going lives in merchant vessels and joined men of war when necessity, patriotism or convenience suited them.²

It also meant that the state employed coercion and

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1. Basil A. Lubbock (ed.) Barlow's Journal of His Life at Sea in King's Ships, East and West Indiamen and other Merchantmen from 1659 to 1703 (1934) i 90.
 2. Geoffrey Penn Snotty, The Story of the Midshipman (1957) 3.

persuasion alternately to get as many men and boys as possible habituated to sea life, and then sought for ways to make them available for naval service.

The Navigation Acts, which were primarily aimed at wresting control of entropôt trade from the Dutch and fostering a system of flag discrimination appropriate for an emerging world power, had a useful by-product in relation to the enlistment of seamen, for part of the 1660 Act decreed that if a ship wished to enjoy the privileges of English registration the master and three-quarters of the crew had to be of English origin - 'except in cases of sickness, death or taken prisoner'.¹ This provision had to be regularly relaxed in time of war,² but Lawrence Harper's (1939) view that the Navigation Acts should be looked at as a kind of 'social engineering' seems valid in this context because the increase in shipping arising from the extension of empire and overseas trade necessitated at least a three-fold increase in merchant ship crews.³

1. 12 Chas II c 18, s.7.

2. For example, in 1793 the Imprest Service had been so effective in securing seamen for the fleet that an Act (33 Geo III c 26) was passed permitting merchant ship masters to recruit up to 75% of foreign seamen in their crews. However, in the next year another Act (34 Geo III c 68) said that the ratio must be reversed with the return of peace.

3. Lawrence A. Harper The English Navigation Laws (New York, 1939) viii. While there are no authoritative statistics for the number of seamen in this period; a comparison of the figure arrived at by Burghley's census of 1583 with that of 50,000 common seamen noted by Gregory King in 1695 for the year 1688 may be held to justify the observation. King's tract entitled Natural and Political Observations upon the State and Condition of England is reproduced in Joan Thirsk and J.P. Cooper, Seventeenth-Century Economic Documents (Oxford, 1972) 781.

Recruiting to fill this need centred on the young and disadvantaged. In 1704 when 'An Act for the Increase of Seamen and better Encouragement of Navigation, and Security of the Coal Trade' was passed the principal aim was to get pauper boys of ten years of age and upwards off the rates and aboard colliers as parish apprentices,¹ but it seems that not many of these children survived the experience because two years later the measure was modified so that masters of colliers were not required to take apprentices who were under thirteen years of age, or were unfit.² This latter piece of legislation also allowed prisoners in debtors' prisons to achieve freedom of a sort by going aboard royal ships. Other enactments passed at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth-centuries tried to reward pugnacity, register seamen and provide for castaways and the disabled.

In 1671 the 'Act to prevent the delivery up of Merchants Shipps, and for the Increase of good and serviceable shipping',³ provided, by s.9., that owners of a ship attacked by pirates could pay compensation (but not more than the value of 2% of the vessel and cargo together) to the widows and children of men killed defending the ship, and an identical provision was made in the Act of 1698⁴ compensating men injured as well as

1. 2 & 3 Anne c 6.

2. 4 & 5 Anne c 6.

3. 22 & 23 Chas II c 11.

4. 11 Will III c 7.

widows and orphans in such circumstances.¹ The state was here passing responsibility for compensation to the private sector and making provision permissive rather than mandatory, but in an enactment of 1727 it took direct responsibility for seamen stranded abroad. The statute was chiefly concerned with inducements to enter naval service,² but part of it empowered colonial governors and consuls to 'tend and provide' for castaways, released captives and shipwrecked seamen, spending up to sixpence a day on their maintenance and sending the bill to the Navy Commissioners. Additionally, these unfortunates were to be sent home at government expense, with masters of conducting vessels having sixpence a day for their keep. It must be said that Admiralty motives were less altruistic than might be supposed. Homeward-bound seamen, not part of a regular crew, are ripe for the attentions of the Imprest Service; castaways and released captives stranded overseas are not. A system of registration for merchant seamen was initiated in the 1690s when a £2 a year bounty was offered to those putting their names on record, but the repealing Act of 1710³ confessed that

1. Contemporaries, such as Daniel Defoe, had pointed out that as there was no arrangement for the care of crippled or wounded seamen, such seamen were understandably reluctant to defend a ship attacked by pirates. See his 'Essay on Projects' in H. Morley, The Early Life and Chief Early Works of Daniel Defoe (1889) 83-85.

2. 1 Geo II c 14. The title was 'An Act for encouraging Seamen to enter into His Majesty's Service'.

3. 9 Anne c 21.

the legislation 'had not had good effect'. The plain truth was that merchant seamen were suspicious of any law that might lead to service under duress in a royal ship where the pay was both inferior and delayed, while the living conditions tended to be more cramped than those in merchantmen, which had smaller crews. In war-time it was not unusual for a man's pay to double if he was serving in a merchant ship,¹ while naval pay might not be increased for a century and a half.²

Admiralty interest in the merchant seaman had a strong element of self-interest because these men were regarded as a 'reservoir of ready-made fighting seamen'³ who were trained in handling square-rigged ships and accustomed to the use of guns. That the interest was selfish may be demonstrated by looking at the history of Greenwich Hospital which, by and large, did not admit disabled or sick merchant seamen although from the late 1690s they had been compelled to contribute to its upkeep.

The founding of Greenwich Hospital as a place of refuge for old and disabled sailors was 'an act of royal bounty'⁴ which seems to have been set in train by

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1. For example, during the Seven Years' War the wages of seamen in a Whitby collier trebled, while those of the mate and the carpenter more than doubled. A.F. Humble 'An Old Whitby Collier', The Mariner's Mirror Vol. 61, No. 1 (1975) 38.
 2. In 1797, one of the complaints of the Spithead mutineers was that their rate of pay had not increased since the reign of Charles I.
 3. R.B. Chenevix Trench 'National Service Two Centuries Ago: The Press Gang' History Today Vol. 6, No. 1 (1956) 38.
 4. Ralph Davis 'Seamen's Sixpences: An index of commercial activity, 1697-1828' Economica Vol. 23, No. 2 (1956) 328.

Queen Mary in order to obtain for her husband, William III, the kind of popularity achieved by Charles II through the establishment of Chelsea Hospital as a home for old and disabled soldiers. The Queen died before the scheme matured, but its basis was that she gave the land, her husband endowed the building and the running costs were to be borne by Parliament and the seamen themselves. A welfare and service package deal was outlined in the 'Act for the Increase and Encouragement of Seamen' of 1696,¹ and it was proposed that all seamen between eighteen and fifty years of age were to sign a register and receive a bounty of £2 annually. Those disabled by age, wounds or accident were to be provided for at Greenwich Hospital, and seamen were to contribute sixpence monthly from their wages for its upkeep. However, an amending Act of 1697² revealed that the scheme was already in trouble with demand for hospital places exceeding availability, while there was widespread evasion in respect of the sixpenny contributions.³ The practical outcome was that only the best-documented seamen - generally those with long naval service - obtained admission, and when new legislation was introduced in 1747⁴ the preamble to the Act stated baldly that merchant

1. 7 & 8 Will III c 21.

2. 8 & 9 Will III c 23.

3. See Chapter Three for an estimate of the extent of evasion in respect of seamen's sixpences.

4. 20 Geo II c 38.

seamen 'have seldom or never' been admitted to Greenwich Hospital because of the low state of funding and the superior claims of naval personnel. However, merchant seamen still had to pay for hospital upkeep, and in the 1720s they were contributing about £590 a year¹ with £6,000 coming from coal duties and £10,000 from the Exchequer. Richard Ollard's (1955) comment that 'the compulsory deduction of sixpence a month from the wretched wages of seamen was a mean expedient' seems apt, particularly as so very few merchant seamen received any benefit.² It was revealed in the next century that a minimum of one day's naval service was a strict requirement for admission to Greenwich Hospital,³ but men with mixed service in the royal and merchant navies often failed in their applications through an inability to cope with bureaucracy. John Nicol, for example, with many years of service afloat behind him, came to London in his infirm old age to try for a place at Greenwich Hospital. He was sent from office to office, passed from clerk to clerk, and eventually went back to Scotland in despair.⁴ The failure of Greenwich Hospital to

1. CJ 21 74.

2. Richard Ollard 'Greenwich and the Royal Naval Hospital' History Today Vol. 4, No. 11 (1955) 780.

3. This was a purely administrative requirement, and its existence was first revealed during a Commons debate on 24 April 1835. See Hansard 3 22 1372.

4. John Howell ('J.H.') (ed.) The Life and Adventures of John Nicol, Mariner (Edinburgh, 1822) 209-210.

provide for aged, sick or disabled merchant seamen led to the 1747 'Act for the Relief and Support of maimed and disabled Seamen, and the Widows and Children of such as shall be killed, slain or drowned in the Merchants Service' which put welfare provision on a sounder footing.

The new scheme emerged from a proposal provisionally entitled the 'Seamen in the Merchant's Service, Relief, Bill', and after some amendment in the Commons it passed the Lords on 28 May 1747.¹ The intention was that seamen and their widows and orphans should receive life pensions contingent on the production of a 'certificate of hurt' or, in the case of illness or disease, a certificate of previous good health. The claimants had to have paid a minimum of five years'² contributions, but apprentices, East India Company seamen (who had their own scheme), men under eighteen years of age, fishermen and those employed on river craft and undecked boats in the coastal trades were ineligible.³ The trustees of the Merchant Seamen's Fund were to be based in London, while committees would sit at the out-

1. LJ 27 124.

2. The contribution rate was sixpence a month, but as most men could only count on getting some nine months' work a year it might be seven years before the minimum contribution had been paid.

3. These exclusions were the result of hard-won experience in trying to collect small sums from those with small incomes. The Act of 1712 (10 Anne c 17) had exempted fishermen and small boatmen, pauper apprentices under eighteen and the crews of Thames hoys from paying seamen's sixpences.

ports. The scheme was to last for more than a century, and while it was able to provide a kind of supplementary benefit for those in need the funding was never sufficient for whole maintenance, and the location of the majority of aged and infirm seamen meant that local distribution of benefit was an impractical and inequitable method. The pattern of a man's working life was that he began as a boy in coasting craft and went deep-sea at maturity. After thirty years of age with a family to consider and waning physical capacity he tended to return to coasters where he would have shorter voyages and more time at home. Consequently, the demand for Merchant Seamen's Fund pensions was greatest at the coal ports of the north-east where perhaps half of all seamen lived, and the sums granted there were minute. In Chapter Three this subject will be again explored as the efforts of the Victorians to bolster the Fund are looked at in more detail.

The Laws of Oléron and English Common Law had proved to be insufficiently precise for the regulation of the sailors' contractual commitment in the early eighteenth-century - especially in time of war when wages tended to rise dramatically - and in 1728 the merchant class made an approach to Parliament to complain of the lack of discipline among merchant seamen. Their evidence, given to the House on 6 March 1728,¹ is most illuminating. Samuel Bonham, a Guinea merchant, said

1. CJ 21 253-254.

that his men collected their 'river pay'¹ at Gravesend prior to leaving for the West Coast, and then not only went ashore unless they got higher wages but compounded their insolence by neglecting to return the ship's boat. Henry Gough, in the East Indian trade, testified that his seamen jumped ship after receiving 'river pay' and a two months' advance of wages, while those who did make the round trip tended to leave the ship before it had been discharged on their return to the Thames. Joseph Groves was incensed because men absenting themselves abroad demanded their wages although they might have been away from the ship for months at a time, while Peter Delamot stressed that the work-shy could not be compelled to carry out their duties. James Fitter believed that verbal contracts between master and men were unsatisfactory because they often left ships in 'Distress for want of Hands'. The House ordered Alderman John Barnard² and Humphrey Morice³ to prepare and introduce a Bill to remedy these deficiencies, and on 14 April 1729 Alderman Barnard presented a Bill for first reading. The contents of this Bill are not known, but it may be surmised that it limited sailors' access

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1. A sum paid to men 'standing-by' a ship ready to sail.
 2. John Barnard (1685-1764), was a Quaker wine merchant who was MP for the City of London from 1722-1761.
 3. Humphrey Morice (1671-1731), was a Turkey merchant and a governor of the Bank of England. On his death it was found that he had lived by fraud for most of his life.

to the Courts because ten days later several 'Mariners and seamen' petitioned the House to urge that no steps be taken to limit their existing recourse to the Courts for recovery of wages due.¹ The Bill was sent to committee, and on 1 May 1729 Alderman Barnard reported back that while the committee had found the 'Allegations of the Bill' correct they wished to make some amendments. When debated on 3 May 1729 an amendment to allow the Admiralty Court to decide contractual disputes was lost, and a proposal that fines imposed under the new Act be paid to Greenwich Hospital was carried. On 6 May 1729 an additional clause was put in at the Admiralty's behest to the effect that seamen leaving a merchant ship to serve in a royal vessel should have their wages paid to date when leaving.² The Bill passed the Commons and went off to the Lords where it had its first reading on 7 May 1729. The Lords passed the Bill on 13 May 1729 after debate, but without amendment.³

A full description has been given of the passage of this Bill because the 1729 Act⁴ is the most significant piece of legislation effecting the sailors'

1. CJ 21 347.

2. This proviso remained in force until the twentieth-century, being embodied in ss. 195-197 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1894. It is further discussed in the footnote on page 44.

3. CJ 21 366 and LJ 23 434.

4. 2 Geo II c 36. 'An Act for the better Regulation and Government of Seamen in the Merchants Service'.

lot put on the statute book prior to 1800. It created the new offence of desertion, with a penalty of up to thirty days' hard labour in 'the House of Correction', while for absence without leave seamen were to forfeit two days' pay for every day of absence. A man who left his ship without permission before unloading was completed, or before he had properly been discharged, could be fined up to a months' pay. There were some gains for crew members. All seamen, except apprentices, had to sign written agreements for wages due within three days of going aboard ship, and the agreed wages had to be paid within thirty days of the ship clearing Customs inwards. Additionally, if there was a dispute about wages the owner or master was obliged to produce the wages agreement to the Court. The Act was regularly extended until 1761, when it was made perpetual and extended to cover American colonial ships,¹ while in 1791 the larger vessels in the English coasting trade were also included.² The Act of 1786 which made the registration of British ships compulsory checked any tendency towards evasion by owners or masters who wished to keep their contractual obligations vague, or ran ships with dual or treble nationality, for this latter piece of legislation ordered that a change of master be endorsed on the certificate of registry so as to counter attempts to shift legal responsibility from one pair of

1. 2 Geo II c 31.

2. 31 Geo III c 39.

shoulders to another.¹

The 1729 Act may be categorised as an attempt by the merchant class to make labour a stable part of variable costs for the duration of a voyage, but two factors acted in such a way as to frustrate this intention. In times of war, demand for sea labour increases and higher wages are offered, and there is lack of uniformity of demand in the geographical sense during both war and peace. For example, in the next century wages tended always to be high in Quebec where new ships were built for overseas sale and a crew had to be obtained to deliver them to a buyer, while at Calcutta where old ships were sent for final employment with lascar crews before going to the breakers there was a corresponding surplus of European crew and consequent low demand, and low wages. Wages in colonial vessels tended always to be higher because of the relative shortage of labour along the American seaboard, and in war-time they stood higher still. In 1797, for example, wages and the desertion rate were up in the West Indies, and the remedies proposed in an Act of that year² were a curious mixture of threats and a resigned acceptance of economic forces. Deserters were to forfeit their wages, and masters hiring known deserters were subject to a fine of up to £100. However, recognizing the position of masters

1. 26 Geo III c 60.

2. 37 Geo III c 73. 'An Act for preventing the Desertion of Seamen from British Merchant Ships ... in the West Indies'.

recruiting labour during a time of severe shortage of that commodity, section three of the Act said that up to double the usual rate of wages could be paid, and if it was a question of more than double wages the consent of the governor, chief magistrate or collector had to be obtained. A man absent for more than twenty-four hours was deemed to be a deserter - previously the period had not been specified - and a model wages agreement for the men to sign was reproduced in a schedule to the Act. This itemised document gave much fuller information than before. A man signing it would know what half his river, or stand-by, pay might be, and the whole sum. His wage, by the month or by the voyage, was set down, and so was the total sum due. There could be no chicanery about his length of service or his rate aboard the ship: it was noted in the agreement.¹ Did the 1797 Act succeed in its main purpose? Apparently not, because the amount of forfeited pay and prize money paid over annually from deserter's accounts to Greenwich Hospital kept on rising, and amounted to over £2,500 in 1802.² The secondary benefit of a model wages agreement was infinitely more important in the long term: no class of worker ashore had such complete theoretical protection of his wages in 1797 - it was unique for the period.

The Admiralty continued to follow its policy

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1. A reproduction of this form of agreement is at Appendix Four (A).
 2. Figure quoted by A.G. Course, The Merchant Navy: A social history (1962) 68.

of maintaining the number of seamen through coercive legislation, and s.4 of the 1797 Act directed that owners were to ship one apprentice for every hundred tons registered in their names. It was appreciated that seamen had to be brought young to the trade,¹ and that while the labour shortage was acute through the activities of the Press Gang the recruitment of apprentices could fill the gap because they were exempt from the attentions of the Imprest Service during the first three years of their indentures. Masters, mates, boatswains, carpenters, men over fifty-five years of age, foreigners and those employed at ports and dockyards and holding exemption certificates² also escaped impressment, so that it was foremast hands in the prime of life who were at risk and who feared the Press Gang most of all. John Bechervaise, a Jersey seaman, thought that 'the dread of a ship of war was next to a French prison',³ and the crews of Hull whalers were smuggled ashore in boxes and barrels, adopted women's clothes and fought

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1. Sir Thomas Roe saw the process as 'the breeding of mariners' in his 1641 speech on the decay of trade, and the 1704 Act envisaged the recruitment of boys at ten years of age. A man of ability who began life at sea at that age could be a master by his early twenties. See Thirsk and Cooper, Seventeenth-Century Economic Documents 44, 2 & 3 Anne c 6, and the A.G.E. Jones typescript 'Daniel Bennett and Co.' in the BLRD (reference X905/100).
 2. Also called protections, these documents were issued by the Admiralty and bore a physical description of the holder in the margin.
 3. John Bechervaise, Thirty Six Years of a Seafaring Life: by an Old Quarter Master (1839) 47.

the Press Gangs to avoid being taken for naval service.¹ It was a time of high wages,² and the workforce numbered about 100,000 men,³ but while there was a general appreciation that seamen were a vital bulwark against invasion as they had been in Tudor times there was no disposition to legislate further in respect of this class of worker. In a 'legally-minded age'⁴ it might be expected that following the mutinies at the Nore and Spithead and the consequent improvement in the pay and diet of naval seamen that some standard might be set for merchant seamen, but fear of any reform that might be seen to derive from events across the English Channel seems to have inhibited the government of the day. There was to be no legislation covering the working conditions of merchant seamen at this time and, with one exception, nothing in the statute book covering diet and accommodation.

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1. Peter Adamson, The Great Whale to Snare; The Whaling Trade of Hull (City of Kingston-upon-Hull Museums and Art Galleries pamphlet, 1975, 6).
 2. An ABs wage was about £4-5s a month - almost double the wage rate obtaining in the depressed 1830s.
 3. Appendix Three gives a figure of just over 110,000 men taken from PRO Customs 17/21, but it is a theoretical maximum based on tonnage figures, and assumes that all ships on the register are at sea and fully manned. Three years later, Lord Liverpool's estimate for 1800 gives about 10% less than the Customs statistics, and for the period of the Napoleonic Wars it will be assumed that the figure given in Appendix Three, less 10%, is correct. See also Appendix Three (v).
 4. G.M. Trevelyan, English Social History (Bath, 1973 edition) 350.

The diet of seamen during the second half of the eighteenth-century varied enormously from ship to ship. Samuel Kelly, serving in the Post Office packet Grenville in 1778, reports that each man was entitled to six pounds of bread and five pounds of salted meat a week. The beef was coarse, and the barrels of pork contained pig's heads with iron rings through the noses, pig's feet and tails with the hair still on them.¹ The naval provision scale of 1785² was also based on bread³ and salt meat, but had the addition of dried peas, oatmeal, butter, cheese and beer, while the food supplied for the crew of the whaler Exeter outward-bound on a four months' Arctic cruise in 1756 was both ample in quantity and so varied as to give a balanced diet. There were three kinds of meat - pork, beef and mutton. Flour, pease, sugar, spice and pickles were provided, together with tea, coffee, oatmeal, beer, potatoes, butter, cheese and vinegar. For the after-guard, twelve fowls gave eggs, while mustard seed was carried to supply a small amount of fresh greens.⁴ However, there was one class of ship where, even by the

1. Crosbie Garstin (ed.), Samuel Kelly, An Eighteenth-Century Seaman (1925) 29.

2. See Appendix Eleven (A).

3. What is euphemistically described as 'bread' in these diets was a kind of flinty dog-biscuit that had been baked hard for long keeping. In the twentieth-century it still forms part of lifeboat rations.

4. From the 'Exeter Whale Fishery Ledger' kept at the East Devon Record Office.

standards of the day, both diet and accommodation were grossly below accepted levels, and that was in slavers trading to the West Coast of Africa and the West Indies.

When, in 1788, Parliament began to enquire into the slave trade at the urging of the abolitionists there was no initial intention of taking any interest in crew conditions, but the nature of some of the evidence that emerged compelled action to that end. The death-rates in slavers were startlingly high. James Jones, a merchant, revealed that in a ship named The Brothers half the crew died of disease within three weeks, while Robert Norris, a Carolina merchant, said that during the Middle Passage¹ crews slept on deck under an awning because all the space below decks was taken up with slave accommodation. Similar evidence from Archibald Dalziel, a master and supercargo in slavers, was accompanied by two suggestions, one general and one specific. He suggested that 'some regulation might be adopted ... for ... Seamen on all long voyages' and that 'Seamen be allowed a certain Quantity of Provisions by law'.² This evidence was given on 16 June 1788, and on the following day the points made by Dalziel were brought out in

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1. That is, the passage between West Africa and the West Indies.
 2. From the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee on the Slave Trade, 1788-89. Sheila Lambert (ed.) House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth-Century (1975) 68 9-33. (Referred to hereafter as HCSPEC with volume and page numbers added).

debate by Henry Beaufoy, the Member for Great Yarmouth.¹
 He made an appeal for regulation in respect of diet
 and accommodation in the following passage:

On the part of your seamen, all that is suggested is that after they have hazarded their lives in your service, and fought the battles of their country, you would not, when poverty compels them to accept a birth in an African ship, allow them to be exposed to useless danger or be consigned to unnecessary death.²

Consequently, the 1789 Act for regulating the slave trade had appended to it specimen articles of agreement which included a diet scale and the instruction - 'Provisions to be issued and dressed in the usual Manner in which it is done on Board His Majesty's Ships of War'.³ The Select Committee on the Slave Trade was still at work in 1791-92, and the evidence given before it about crew conditions was much the same as in 1788. Alexander Falconbridge, a surgeon who had served in slavers, testified that there was no accommodation below decks for seamen during the Middle Passage, while Richard Story, a naval lieutenant who had formerly served in the slaver Tyger of Whitehaven, said that ten days after leaving Whitehaven in 1768 crew rations were cut to four pounds of bread a week and half a pound of salt pork a day. He was so hungry during the nine months he was on this scale of provisions that he once stole a handful of rice from the slave rations, and was severely

1. Henry Beaufoy, (d. 1795), was the son of a Quaker wine merchant and a Whig politician.

2. Hansard 1 27 597.

3. 29 Geo III c 66.

beaten for it.¹ It was felt that some reinforcement of the 1789 regulations was required, and when a policy of gradual abolition of the slave trade was agreed following the Dundas debate of 23 April 1792 legislation ensued which was again partially aimed at cutting crew deaths in slavers.² The 'Act to continue for a limited Time, several Acts of Parliament for regulating shipping and carrying Slaves in Vessels from the Coast of Africa' had appended to it a schedule dealing exclusively with seamen's accommodation and diet. Schedule A laid down that awnings or 'tarpawlings' be fitted when the men were out in boats up-river in West Africa, while during the Middle Passage they were to be accommodated either in the half-deck, or the steerage, or in caulked deck-shelters built for the purpose. The schedule also contained a statutory scale of provisions, and as it was to be the only statutory scale in force, however briefly, before 1906 and it clearly illustrates the 'pound and pint' basis of other diets the scale appears in full below.

Sunday	One Pound and a Half of Beef, containing Sixteen Ounces to the Pound, and a Pint of Flour.
Monday	One Pound of Pork, containing Sixteen Ounces to the Pound, and Half a Pint of Pease.

1. HCSPEC 72 309 and 92 12-13.

2. The debate was initiated by Henry Dundas, subsequently Viscount Melville (1742-1811), who was Home Secretary and who later became Treasurer of the Navy. For the debate see Hansard 1 29 1203-1293. The ensuing Act was 32 Geo III c 52.

Tuesday One Pint of Oatmeal and Two
 Ounces of Butter, and Four
 Ounces of Cheese, or One Pound
 of Stock Fish with One-eighth
 of a Pint of Oil, and a Quarter
 of a Pint of Vinegar, in lieu
 of Butter and Cheese.

Wednesday The same as Monday.

Thursday The Same as Sunday.

Friday The Same as Tuesday.

Saturday The Same as Monday.

Each Person, besides, to have Six
 Pounds of Bread per Week; and a
 Quarter of a Pint of Spirits, or
 Half a Pint of Wine, together with
 (blank) of Water, per Day, during
 the Voyage.

A comparison of this scale with the nineteenth-century diet scales at (B), (D) and (F) in Appendix Eleven shows the persistence of the pork and peas/beef and duff motif in seamen's food - itself a reflection of the difficulties inherent in victualling when only salted, dried or liquid foods, headed-up in barrels for longer keeping, are available. A combination of poor food of this type, hard work, exposure to the elements and to the ravages of ship-borne diseases ensured that seamen were poor physical specimens. A contemporary authority on sea medicine noted that seamen were 'in general short, and have their constitutions worn out ten years before the rest of the laborious part of mankind. A seaman at the age of 45, if shewn to a person not accustomed to be among them, would be taken by his looks to be 55, or even on the borders of 60'.¹ Long

1. Gilbert Blane, Observations on the Diseases Incident to Seamen (1785) 211.

hours were common in all walks of life, but seamen had the additional burden of broken and irregular rest periods due to the watch-and-watch system that gave them no more than three and a half hours of sleep at a time. Until the nineteenth-century was well advanced legislation centred chiefly on discipline and liability for naval service, and although the merchant seaman had a state-supervised contract of employment that contract was often broken by the state itself. Britain was at war for fifty of the seventy-five years from 1740 to 1815, and with no long-service ratings in the Royal Navy the Imprest Service was more likely to be active than idle in those years. Greenwich Hospital was a doubtful haven for old and disabled merchant seamen, while Merchant Seamen's Fund payments were generally inadequate to keep a man out of the workhouse in sickness or old age. Private charity was limited,¹ and the economic position of men in work tended to be precarious. Engaged by the voyage, or by the 'run',² subject to unemployment during the months of winter when ships were laid up, harassed by the Imprest Service in times of war, it is not to be

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1. The Society of Merchant Venturers of Bristol, the Society of Keelmen at Newcastle and the Corporation of Trinity House at Hull are examples of local charities that provided some aid to infirm or disabled seamen, but demand was always greatly in excess of what could be provided.
 2. Normally, a seaman's contract was for a round voyage, but where a short, single-leg, passage was concerned men would be engaged at a fixed sum for the 'run' between ports irrespective of time taken.

wondered at that recruits to the merchant service were often, in Alan Villiers' (1975) phrase, 'the landless, the non-inheritors, the under-privileged'.¹ A square-rig seamen needed many skills, but was accorded low status. Parliament was quick to acknowledge that 'the Welfare and Riches of this Kingdom greatly depend on the Trade and Navigation thereof',² but slow to appreciate that while the workforce had increased six-fold in the period from the end of the sixteenth-century to the end of the eighteenth-century the living and working conditions of that workforce had scarcely changed at all. Where improvements in the sailors' lot may be noted they are invariably by-products. Repatriation at government expense, a fixed-wage contract of employment, a food scale for the crews of slavers and the institution of the Merchant Seamen's Fund are by-products of trade-enhancing and naval recruiting measures - not spontaneous expressions of goodwill by Parliament in respect of an essential group of workers.

1. Alan Villiers, Voyaging with the Wind (NMM, 1975) 11.

2. From the preamble to the 1729 Act.

CHAPTER TWO

BENIGN NEGLECT, 1800 to 1837

In the early nineteenth-century the British merchant fleet was the largest in the world, but it was not progressing in line with competitors and its total tonnage rose by only 8% between 1815 and 1840.¹ An excess of carrying capacity and low freights consequent on the end of the Napoleonic wars is generally blamed for this state of affairs,² but three crew-related factors require emphasis. First, there was divided responsibility within government for merchant ships and their crews. The Board of Trade, created in 1786,³ only gradually took over full responsibility for the merchant service, and it was not until 1850 that it had the statutory duty to 'undertake the general Superintendence of Matters relating to the British Mercantile Marine'.⁴

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1. R.H. Thornton, British Shipping (Cambridge, 1945) 43, and Appendix One.
 2. For example, in Lucy Brown, The Board of Trade and the Free Trade Movement (1958) 177.
 3. It was originally a committee of the Privy Council dealing with trade and overseas plantations, and was set up by an Order in Council dated 23 August 1786. The 'Board' was a legal fiction, for the President generally acted alone. Many leading politicians, including Gladstone and Lloyd George, held the office, and it served to give relatively young men their first experience of running a government department. After 1864 the President was frequently a junior cabinet minister. The most comprehensive account of the Board's history may be found in Sir H. Llewellyn Smith, The Board of Trade (1927).
 4. 13 & 14 Vic c 93, s.6.

Eight other government departments had a finger in the pie, of whom the Admiralty and the Colonial Office were the most significant. Admiralty interest waned slightly after 1853 with the institution of continuous service for naval ratings - which meant in turn that the merchant service was no longer seen as the chief recruiting ground for the navy - while the Colonial Office did not relinquish its hold on passenger ships and the emigrant trade until 1872.¹ Indeed, it is not too strong a statement to say that the whole-hearted interest of the Board of Trade in the merchant seaman dates from about 1832 - the year when the Statistical Department was created and placed under Board of Trade aegis, and when an increasing amount of adverse publicity was being voiced at the extent of the loss of life and property at sea and the rising number of shipwrecks.²

This first factor of divided responsibility for merchant seamen leads to the second, which is that most of the legislation effecting British seamen in the period was either derivative or consolidatory in nature. In 1805 a loophole whereby coasting seamen in vessels of under 100 tons had escaped the provisions of the 1729 Act was closed,³ while in 1813 the maintenance scales

1. By 35 & 36 Vic c 73, s.7.

2. The Nautical Magazine, first in the field, was followed by the Edinburgh Review and the Metropolitan Magazine in keeping up a high level of agitation leading eventually to the 1836 Select Committee on Shipwrecks.

3. 45 Geo 3 c 81.

for distressed British seamen were revised.¹ Five years later it was decreed that sick seamen left in hospital abroad should have their wages, less hospital expenses, paid to them,² and the 1819 Act 'for facilitating the Recovery of the Wages of Seamen in the Merchant Service'³ reduced waiting time for final pay-off from the thirty days laid down in 1729 to two days from Customs entry, cargo delivery or discharge. Admiralty-inspired legislation aimed at keeping up the number of recruits to the sea service had been a feature of the eighteenth-century, and this type of law-making was repeated in 1823 when it was enacted that all merchant ships of eighty tons or more had to carry apprentices according to a tonnage-based scale, as follows:

80-200 tons	at least one apprentice
200-400 tons	at least two apprentices
400-500 tons	at least three apprentices
500-700 tons	at least four apprentices
over 700 tons	at least five apprentices

and these apprentices were to be under seventeen years of age at the time of signing indentures and to serve a four-year term. The measure was also popular with shipowners because it seemed to endorse the extensive use of cheaper labour and the Bill's prime mover, the

1. By 53 Geo 3 c 85. The 6d a day maintenance for castaways and shipwrecked mariners had been raised to 9d a day in 1792 and was left at Admiralty discretion after 1813. In 1825 consuls abroad were provided with funds under the provisions of 6 Geo 4 c 87 on a scale to be fixed by Order in Council, and this arrangement continued until repeal in 1973.

2. 58 Geo 3 c 38.

3. 59 Geo 3 c 25.

free-trader William Huskisson,¹ said at the third reading that the measure had given universal satisfaction to the shipowning interest.² In the event, the obligation to produce apprentices at the Customs House at regular intervals became wearisome to owners, and after a quarter of a century they gladly voted to be rid of it.

The ninth section of the 1823 Act³ sought to deal with the continuing problem of desertion. There was a frank admission that previous legislation had been 'found ineffectual for that Object', and the remedy was to increase penalties. Deserters were not only to forfeit all wages due from the ship they had left, as laid down in 1797, but also the wages earned on the voyage back to Britain that brought them again within jurisdiction. Nothing could have been better calculated to reduce the number of British seamen serving in British ships, for it gave men who deserted for economic reasons a prime incentive for remaining in colonial or foreign vessels. It was also misconceived as an effective penalty because the cost of recovering wages earned on the return voyage by legal process might swallow up much of the amount awarded. When a case involving the recovery of the wages of a deserter was heard at the Sheriff's Court at Greenock in 1849 the finding was in

1. William Huskisson (1770-1830), was President of the Board of Trade at the time and an early advocate of the relaxation of the Navigation Laws. He is now chiefly remembered as being the first person killed by a train in Britain.

2. Hansard 2 8 1125-1126.

3. 4 Geo 4 c 25.

favour of the shipowner. However, while the amount recovered was £9-11s-6d the costs of the case were £5-13s, some 59% of the award.¹

The Merchant Shipping Act of 1835² was the first of the three major consolidating Acts of the century,³ and the intention was to group into one measure practically every regulation involving merchant seamen that had emerged in the previous hundred and thirty years. The government's view was that 'the only just ground on which any alteration ought to be made in the old laws was that they contained provisions that were not reconcilable to expediency and justice'⁴ and, in general, it contained few new elements. The final debate⁵ was dominated by Sir James Graham⁶ who, as First Lord of the Admiralty, put the interests of his department first. The 1704 device of shipping parish apprentices was revived by s.26, using the numbers formula of

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1. Quoted by W.S. Lindsay in Our Mercantile and Navigation Laws Considered with a view to their General Revision and Consolidation (1852) 272.
 2. 5 & 6 Will 4 c 19. Often referred to as Graham's Act.
 3. The others are the Merchant Shipping Acts of 1854 and 1894.
 4. Hansard 3 28 198.
 5. On 27 May 1835. Hansard 3 28 194-201.
 6. Sir James Robert George Graham, (1792-1861), was a Whig politician who went over to the Tories in 1841 and became Home Secretary. According to his DNB entry, he 'tended to pomposity and carried the habit of quotation to inordinate lengths'. A kinder verdict is given in Arvel B. Erickson, The Public Career of Sir James Graham (1952).

1823, and the General Register Office of Merchant Seamen established by s.19 was much on the lines of the register system set up by the 1696 Act - the object being again to further the long-standing policy of keeping up the numbers of seamen and ensuring that they could be readily called upon to serve in the Royal Navy in times of war. A recognisable shipowners' lobby in Parliament had been in existence since 1831,¹ and its principal spokesman in 1835 was George Frederick Young, the Member for Tynemouth. A small reform group was led by James Silk Buckingham, the Member for Sheffield.² The reformers were only able to defeat the combined strength of the Admiralty and the shipowners over one issue - the contribution made by merchant seamen for the upkeep of Greenwich Hospital.

The question of provision for sick and disabled

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1. The Times of 10 June 1831 shows that a general association of shipowners had been formed following a meeting in London the previous day. Aaron Chapman, M.P. for Whitby, and George Frederick Young, MP for Tynemouth, were the leading lights. An article - 'The General Ship Owners Society' - in the October 1832 issue of The Nautical Magazine Vol.1 420-423 shows the organisation was created because trade was depressed, and that its foundation derived from a provisional meeting of shipowners on 10 April 1828.
 2. James Silk Buckingham, (1786-1855). He had gone to sea at nine years of age and commanded his first ship at twenty-one. Subsequently a merchant in Malta, then editor of the Calcutta Journal, he was expelled from India for exposing corrupt practices there. He was MP for Sheffield from 1832, and became a popular travel writer. His DNB entry describes him as an imaginative liberal who was industrious, but capricious. A detailed contemporary account of his life is contained in the Biographical Sketch of James Silk Buckingham of 1853 prepared for inclusion in a larger work - Lives of the Illustrious. A copy of the former is in the BLRD under reference 10825 b.14. See also James Silk Buckingham 1786-1855 (1934) by Ralph E. Turner.

merchant seamen was raised by Buckingham on 24 April and 16 May 1835, and he made the telling point that it was manifestly unjust for poor men to be compelled to pay for Greenwich Hospital when they received no benefit from it.¹ Sir James Graham's defence of the contribution was spirited, but muddled. He claimed on 24 April 1835 that doing away with the merchant seamen's sixpences would cost Greenwich Hospital a third of its funds, but on 16 May 1835 said that only a seventh of its revenue was at stake. The kernel of his argument was that 'many of the seamen alluded to had acquired chronic diseases when afloat in the mercantile navy, and having been for a short time on board his Majesty's ships they fell back upon the Hospital', but the Member for the City of London pointed out that a minimum of one days' crown service had always been required, and quoted the case of a merchant seaman disabled while serving a gun under the directions of a naval officer at Jamaica who had been denied admission although he was a contributor. Sir James Graham then gave figures in an attempt to show that merchant seamen were not discriminated against in the matter of admission. In 1834 there were 2,700 inmates at Greenwich of whom 1,180 had served for some period in the merchant service. Some 300 of the 1,180 men had served from between thirty to fifty years, and their average service in merchant ships was thirteen years. The House was unimpressed: Sir James Graham lost the

1. Hansard 3 22 1371-1372 and 3 23 1147-1148.

ensuing division by thirty-seven votes and the seamen's sixpence, now raised to a shilling, that had for so long been paid to Greenwich Hospital, went to the Merchant Seamen's Fund.¹ He gained the day, however, over the question of seamen leaving merchant ships to join naval vessels having full entitlement to pay (s.46).² It was argued that this was the only way of recruiting to replace losses when on foreign stations, and while the shipping interest felt the clause to be demoralizing and destructive of trust they were not prepared to tackle the government head-on over the issue.

The wage legislation of 1819 was amended by the 1835 Act. On coasters, the payment of wages within two days of discharge remained the rule, but in foreign-going vessels waiting time was increased to three days from cargo delivery or ten days from discharge. Sir James Graham took the view that delay was desirable

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1. Greenwich Hospital was awarded a compensatory grant by the Exchequer.
 2. This provision had been embodied in the 1729 Act, and subsequently s. 195 of the 1894 Act confirmed that 'A seaman may leave his ship for the purpose of forthwith entering the naval service of Her Majesty, and in that case shall not by reason of so leaving his ship be liable to any punishment or forfeiture whatever'. In practice, what happened was that a disgruntled seaman in a merchant ship would hoist a shirt in the fore rigging to attract the attention of a warship's look-outs, and the first lieutenant - always on the alert for new recruits - would send a boat. If the man was accepted for naval service he would get his back pay to date and take all his effects with him. Naturally, shipowners detested the practice, and complaints about it form part of the evidence given to the Navy Manning Commissioners in 1859, while W.S. Lindsay refused to sign the Report for that reason. See the Report of the Commissioners appointed to enquire into the best means of Manning the Navy, BPP 1859 (2469) VI xxiii. (Referred to hereafter as RCMN 1859). The legal basis of the practice was established by the Amphitrite case of 1832, (2 Hag. Adm. 403).

because it prevented sailors spending all their money on the first night ashore, while George Frederick Young wanted the ten-day delay to enable owners to check on possible thefts from the cargo.¹ Neither party seemed to realise that by keeping seamen in the dock area unpaid and restless after a voyage they were playing into the hands of the crimps.² The latter often obtained initial control over seamen during the waiting period by providing them with loans, drink and creature comforts, and would accompany their clients to the pay-off venue so as to obtain payment for past services and channel future spending in the crimps' interest. The administration and the shipping interest cannot have been unaware of the situation, because s.10 of the 1835 Act was intended to deal with crimps. There was to be a £10 penalty for

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1. Hansard 3 20 194-201. This episode shows how strongly the concept that 'freight is the mother of wages' had survived. Cautions in respect of embezzlement from cargo or stores continued to be printed on crew agreements down to 1970, and Appendix Four contains reproductions of three crew agreements with appropriate warnings deriving from the twelfth-century Laws of Oléron.
 2. Crimping is a phenomenon much described, but rarely examined objectively. A crimp made his profits in three ways. First, he induced the homeward-bound sailor to spend his money, or use the credit facilities, at the crimps' premises - often a boarding house, but sometimes a bar or a brothel. Second, he 'sold' sailors for 'blood money' to masters seeking crews. Third, the man in his debt either signed over his advance note for one or two months' pay, made a fictitious allotment or permitted the crimp to discount a note for him before sailing. What is not often appreciated is that crimps were sometimes valuable intermediaries in the labour market at a time when sophisticated arrangements for placing sea labour did not exist. See J.R. Bruijn, 'Seamen in Dutch Ports: c.1700 - c.1914', The Mariner's Mirror Vol. 65, No. 4 (1979) 327.

harbouring deserters, while debts over five shillings in value incurred between signing-on and sailing were void until the voyage had been completed. The age-old device of removing a drunken seaman's clothes so as to keep him virtually a prisoner in a crimp's boarding-house was made an offence - the relevant legal phrase reading ... 'nor shall it be lawful for any Keeper of a Public House or of a Lodging House for Seamen to withhold or detain any Chest, Bed or Bedding, Clothes, Tools or other Effects ... '. The penalties for desertion remained unchanged, but the form of agreement laid down by the 1835 Act was altered so as make desertion more difficult. In Appendix Four (B) it may be seen that three new items of information must be given when signing-on. A man now had to give his age, his place of birth and the name of his last ship. The 1797 form of agreement (Appendix Four (A)) required him to give merely his name, but it is interesting to note that in both documents his 'Quality' (rank or competence) had to be stated. Later in this study the whole question of competence, and qualifications, of seamen - particularly Able Seamen - will be shown to be the subject of intense governmental scrutiny.

To the first factor of divided responsibility for ships and seamen and the second of 'legislative quiescence'¹ must be added the third - that the British

1. Albert Venn Dicey, the British jurist and constitutional lawyer, used this expression to describe law-making in the first third of the nineteenth-century in his Lectures on the Relationship between Law and Public Opinion during the Nineteenth-Century (1914 edition) 62-64.

shipping industry was weak because American construction and operating methods were superior and to compete British owners had to cut costs to the bone. R.H.

Thornton's (1945) assessment for this period was that

There was little direct recruitment of officers, masters were illiterate, navigation crude and unscholarly and, except in the aristocratic and uneconomic conditions of East Indiamen, the employment of hands was beggarly, harsh and poor.¹

R. Prouty (1957) thought that British owners 'spent too little on the construction of a ship, on its maintenance, and on the training and welfare of the crew. The result was a general deterioration'.² Oliver MacDonagh (1961) makes an attack on owners and ships' officers in the period, saying that 'shipwrecks and putting back in distress were almost everyday occurrences, with bad vessels, bad navigation and drunken ships' officers sharing the blame in almost equal parts'.³ A contemporary, the scientist Augustin Creuze, believed that

The mercantile navy of England is the least speedy and most unsafe that belongs to a civilized nation. America is not only in possession of a better mercantile navy with which to compete with us, but she also has the vantage-ground of superior knowledge and ... the merchant builders of Britain are ... unequal to the task of competition.⁴

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1. Thornton, British Shipping 25
 2. R. Prouty, The Transformation of the Board of Trade (1957) 32-33.
 3. Oliver MacDonagh, A Pattern of Government Growth 1800-60 (1961) 48.
 4. Quoted by John Malcolm Brinnin, The Sway of the Grand Saloon - a Social History of the North Atlantic (1972) 9.

Given this background of a general recession, government indifference, legislative quiescence and inferior vessels it is hardly surprising that the sailor's lot was unenviable. His wages had fallen 40% between 1815 and 1833,¹ and in the latter year the workforce was some 14% smaller than in the former.² The officers were practical seamen, but lacked the equipment for precise navigation.³ Conditions for seamen were primitive, and W.S. Lindsay, who was at sea in a 420-ton timber and sugar carrier in 1834, has left the following pen-picture of his life on board.⁴ It is a long quotation, but valuable for its completeness.

The cook, ten seamen and three apprentices had their abode in the forecastle. This place, which was in the 'tween decks at the extremity of the bow, may have been about twenty-one feet in width at the after or widest part, tapering gradually away to a narrow point at the stem. The length in

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1. Evidence of Robert A. Gray, shipowner, to the 1833 Select Committee on Manufactures, Commerce and Shipping. Report of the Select Committee on Manufactures, Commerce and Shipping, BPP 1833 (690) VI 231. Report referred to hereafter as RSCMCS 1833.
 2. See Appendix Three.
 3. 'It was rare to meet with a scientific, efficient navigator, and not one ship in a hundred was furnished with a chronometer'. George Coggeshall, Thirty-Six Voyages to Various Parts of the World (1974 edition) 61.
 4. William Schaw Lindsay (1816-1877), was a merchant and shipowner, a humanitarian and a free trader. He served afloat from 1831-40, and was MP for Tynemouth and Sunderland between 1854 and 1865. His books include A History of Merchant Shipping and Ancient Commerce and Our Navigation and Mercantile Laws considered with a view to their General Revision and Consolidation.

midships was somewhere about twenty feet, but much less as the sides of the vessel were approached. The height was five feet from deck to beam, or about five feet nine inches from deck to deck; the only approach to it being through a scuttle or hole in the main deck, about two and a half feet square. Beyond this hole there was no means of obtaining either ventilation or light, and in bad weather, when the sea washed over the deck, the crew had to do as best they could without either, or receive the air mixed with spray, and sometimes accompanied by the almost unbroken crest of a wave, which in defiance to all tarpaulin guards, too frequently found its way through the scuttle. Here fourteen persons slept in hammocks suspended from the beams and had their daily food. There was no room for tables, chairs or stools so the tops of their seachests in which they kept their clothes and all their worldly possessions were substituted for those useful and necessary household articles. ... At all times it was a foul and suffocating abode, and in bad weather the water and filth which washed about the deck and among the chests and casks created the most intolerable and loathsome stench. Here, however, these fourteen sailors and apprentices slept, washed, dressed and had their food, except in fine weather, when they took their meals on deck, their food consisting almost entirely of inferior salted pork or beef, which was sometimes as hard and unpalatable as the kids in which it was served, and brown biscuits, too often mouldy and full of maggots.¹

There were no sanitary arrangements for seamen in this period, and the 'heads' in the bows of vessels were a sea-washed area beneath the bowsprit without privacy or comfort. Inadequate clothing led to 'ship-fever' or typhus in cold climates, with the disease transmitted by body-lice, while yellow fever, malaria and bubonic plague were picked up in the tropics. The diet of salt meat and long-baked biscuit meant that scurvy was common on foreign-

1. W.S. Lindsay, History of Merchant Shipping and Ancient Commerce (1874) ii 497-498.

going ships, while cholera spread readily through the medium of infected water. Exposure to the elements made for a short working life, as a Glasgow official testified in 1847.

We find the sea service very severe. Rheumatism particularly unfits them; they often have shrivelled fingers and hands, and are quite unfitted at 50 from rheumatism. The great portion from 50 to 60 are superannuated.¹

In general, the provision of protective clothing, bedding and food was not regulated in any way by government, although there was a single exception in the case of lascars - Indian seamen recruited initially for local service in what were termed 'country ships'.²

The impressment of British seamen for service with the Royal Navy in Indian waters during the early stages of the struggle with France led to an acute shortage of sea labour,³ and there was a corresponding rise in demand for the services of lascars.⁴ The earliest

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1. Report of the Royal Commission on the Merchant Seamen's Fund, BPP 1847-48 (931) XXVIII 491. Referred to hereafter as RRCMSF 1847-48.
 2. Ships which traded solely within the Indian Ocean and which were often on their final employment before being broken-up.
 3. As may be seen from the exchange of letters between the EIC and the Indian Commissioners after the war. See the Return of correspondence between the Commissioners for the Affairs of India and other public bodies relative to the care and maintenance of lascars, BPP 1816 (279) X 349-350.
 4. Deriving from the Persian, and Urdu, word 'lashkar' meaning an army or camp, it became in the seventeenth-century the name given to native gunners serving afloat and was finally adopted to describe all Indian seafarers.

indication that lascars were crewing ships bound for Europe can be traced back to 1782 when a letter from the East India Company in London to the President and Council at Fort St. George, Madras, complained that Indian seamen were arriving at the London offices having 'been reduced to great distress and applied to us for relief'.¹ The Danes at their settlement at Fredericknagore seem to have been the pioneers in manning ships with all lascar crews, for the evidence is that the initial complaint relates to men discharged in Denmark who then made their way to London to apply for repatriation. The labour shortage in India did not abate and in 1783, despite objections from shipmasters,² a set of rules was drawn up covering the recruitment of lascars in British India.³ A Danish edict of 18 November 1780 had put the onus for the return of lascars from Denmark

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1. India Office Library, London, (henceforth IOL). Home Miscellaneous Correspondence 163 175-185; letter dated 8 July 1782.
 2. For example, Thomas Forrester, a master mariner, wrote indignantly to the Bengal Council on 23 April 1784 to say that his good name was such that he ought to be exempted from having to obtain a crew through the Marine Office. IOL Bengal Public Council Minutes; 21 June to 16 August 1784, Range 3, 5 69.
 3. These rules, registered at the Supreme Court on 7 July 1783, had four main features. Recruitment was through shipping offices, and there was a fixed wage. Maintenance abroad pending repatriation was part of the contract, and after 1806 there was a statutory diet scale. The long-term impact of the rules is assessed in the paper 'Lascars: the forgotten seamen' delivered by the candidate at the Maritime History Group Conference held at Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland in July, 1980. (Publication pending).

to India on shipowners, and when the governor of the small Danish colony at Fredericknagore sent a copy to Warren Hastings¹ the latter embodied its provisions in the rules. The practical effect was to make the East India Company responsible for lascars in the United Kingdom insofar as the Indian administration was concerned, while the British government did its best at first to keep them out altogether. An Act of 1802 took the view that lascars were not to be employed in ships sailing in waters west of the Cape of Good Hope,² but by 1814 economic pressures and a continuing war-induced labour shortage had led to the East India Trade Act of that year which was intended to put 'the better maintenance and care of Lascars and other Asiatic Seamen arriving in this Kingdom' on a proper footing.³

The East India Trade Act outlined a scheme whereby owners or masters of vessels crewed by lascars were responsible, under bond, for feeding, clothing and lodging them in the United Kingdom, while s.3 said that Indian seamen who had somehow slipped through this welfare net would be cared for by the East India Company at the expense of the owners of the conducting ship, always provided that the latter could be traced. This provision was a recognition of the existing state of affairs, because the East India Company had, from 1795

1. In a letter dated 18 March 1783. Warren Hastings (1732-1818), was governor-general of Bengal between 1774 and 1785.

2. 42 Geo 3 c 61, s.9.

3. 54 Geo 3 c 134.

provided meals and accommodation for their lascars at a succession of boarding houses in the Kingsland Road in East London. In 1802, following complaints from the City of London magistrates, the home for lascars was moved to Shoreditch, and from 1804 a contractor named Abraham Gale supplied food and lodging while a physician called Hilton Docker looked after their medical needs.¹ Towards the close of the Napoleonic period the numbers so increased that some of them were housed in barracks at Gravesend, while Hilton Docker's forthright comments on the death rate among these men led to the setting up of a Parliamentary committee of enquiry into the problem.² The Report from the Committee on Lascars and other Asiatic Seamen³ revealed in particular, that while there were shortcomings in the care of lascars ashore they enjoyed a higher standard of care at sea than their European counterparts.

Lascars were victualled according to a statutory scale, had two suits of clothes issued to them and bedding consisting of three blankets sewn together to make a kind of sleeping bag. Shoes, caps

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1. IOL Marine Miscellaneous Correspondence, Lascars 1793-1818, 902 116.
 2. See The Times of 9 December 1814. The information available to the Asiatic Society can only have come from Hilton Docker.
 3. Report from the Committee on Lascars and other Asiatic Seamen, BPP 1814-15 (471) III 217. Referred to hereafter as RCLAS 1814-15.

and mittens were also supplied.¹ The provision scale was not dealt with by this Committee, but another source gives it in full. Instructions to Commanders issued by the Bengal authorities in 1814 show that rice, dal, spices, ghee, onions and garlic formed the basis of the lascar's diet, with limejuice, tamarinds, melons, carrots preserved in sugar, green vegetables preserved in salt and potatoes in vinegar as supplements. Tea and sugar were to be provided, while 'Coffee would be grateful and salutary on such occasions ... as is wanted'.² A full allowance of water was recommended, together with salt beef, salt fish and freshly-killed mutton, when available. Lascars were to be encouraged to oil their bodies and not to sleep in damp clothing. The perils of the shore also required emphasis. 'During the stay of the ship in England', said the Instructions, 'the people ought to be kept as much as possible on board, for on shore they are led into various excesses ... destructive to their health'. On this point the Committee on Lascars reported that the dangers arising out of squalid conditions at the Gravesend barracks quite outweighed the potential health hazards involved in a spree ashore after a long voyage, for scanty concessions to climatic differences were shown to be a main

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1. RCLAS 1814-15 225-226. Appendix containing EIC regulations.
 2. IOL Marine Miscellaneous Correspondence, Lascars 1793-1818, 902 72-74.

cause of ill-health.

The Committee made an unannounced visit to the Gravesend barracks and found that lascars were sleeping on bare boards with a blanket apiece in buildings that were devoid of furniture and unheated. There were neither hammocks nor charpoys¹ for the sick, and salt fish was a constant part of the diet although 'fresh fish are so abundant in London as to be the cheapest article of animal food'.² As many as 1,100 men were living at the barracks at the peak times of the year,³ and the Committee made four recommendations. They suggested the building of a new establishment near the East India Docks with stricter supervision, and more effective legislation to enforce repatriation. The issue of clothing on board ships should be recorded to check the sale of it by lascars ashore. Men left at outports should be sent to London, while abuses of the serang⁴ system should be tackled by the Indian

1. Beds consisting of a wooden frame on low legs with string criss-crossed to hold a thin mattress or rug.

2. RCLAS 1814-15 221.

3. RCLAS 1814-15 220. The arrival of tea cargoes, in particular, gave rise to spectacular increases in the number of lascars housed ashore.

4. Lascars were recruited as gang labour by contractors called 'ghat serangs' and supervised on board by serangs and deputies called tindals. Corruption was endemic, with these petty officers handling the wages of the men and transmitting orders to them from European officers. The Committee were 'unwilling to dwell on the abuses incident to this system' and thought it 'capable of improvement'. RCLAS 1814-15 220-224. Appendix Twelve gives lascar ranks and the European equivalents.

administration. The Gravesend lascars were from private ships rather than those of the East India Company, and many of them would have been deserters, for Hilton Docker had been complaining since 1812 that

lascars desert ... and being found wandering are sent to the ... house, and from the difficulty of language the name of the ship in which they came to England is seldom ascertained.¹

There were, of course, manifest economic advantages in crewing a ship with lascars because their wages were so much lower than those of European seamen,² but a larger crew was generally considered necessary and it was widely believed that they could not stand up to rough and cold weather as well as their European counterparts.³ The compulsory provision of warm clothing, bedding and suitable food was an additional disincentive, and after 1815 it seems to be the case that only two categories of shipowners in eastern trades had an interest in crewing ships with lascars - the wholly responsible and the totally irresponsible. In the first

1. IOL Marine Miscellaneous Correspondence, Lascars 1783-1818, 902; letter dated 5 March 1812.
2. About a ninth of the European rate. First-class lascars - equivalent to ABs - were paid some eight to ten rupees a month in 1814.
3. Joseph Somes, a shipowner with eastern interests, told the 1844 Select Committee on British Shipping that it was generally held that lascars were 30% less efficient in cold weather and that in northern latitudes three lascars might do the work of two European seamen. As he put it: 'when the frost takes them they are good for nothing'. Report from the Select Committee on British Shipping, BPP 1844 (545) VIII QQ. 618-631. Referred to hereafter as RSCBS 1844.

class comes the East India Company, which continued to run a home for Asiatic seamen in New Road, St. George's-in-the-East, until it effectively lost its charter in 1833, while less scrupulous owners tended to house their men in sheds on shore when the ships went into dock and were unconcerned if they drifted away thereafter. It was in recognition of this situation that the 1823 Act, which implemented some of the recommendations of the 1814-15 Committee on Lascars, removed the duty of maintaining lascars ashore from the private owner.

The 1823 Act¹ abolished the bonding system set up in 1814 and made the East India Company responsible for shipping home all stranded Asiatic seamen. Lascars were said in this Act 'not to be equal in Strength and Use to Europeans',² although s.22 permitted their recruitment for service in British-registered ships whenever an insufficient number of white seamen were available at ports in British India. They were held not to be British seamen for the purposes of satisfying the manning requirements of the Navigation Acts in peacetime, but might count as such in times of war.³ This legal dichotomy

1. 4 Geo 4 c 80. The Act remained in force until 1963.

2. Section 21 of the 1823 Act. The corollary that Asiatic seamen might be superior in tropical waters was never put on record in the nineteenth-century.

3. Until mid-century, British ships had to have a British master and be manned by a crew that was at least three-quarters British - except in times of war. The provision originates with s.7 of the 1660 Navigation Act.

meant that while lascars were disadvantaged as regards pay and recruitment their continuing protected status while serving afloat and overseas conferred some material advantages. In the first half of the century they were still generally subject to East India Company regulation: after the Mutiny s.21 of India Act 1 of 1859 governed their diet and specified the number and tasks of the crew.¹ British seamen had no statutory diet scale until 1906, and there was no statutory scale of manning or restriction on working hours in the period studied. The response of the Indian administration to an acute labour shortage had been a forced response: the home government had relied on market forces to bring in more sea labour, and with the coming of peace in 1815 the demand for labour fell away abruptly, with the industry going into a decline for almost a quarter of a century.²

The end of the wars with Napoleon soon brought about chronic unemployment among merchant seamen, and many were speedily reduced to beggary.³ Existing

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1. The EIC lost its commercial function in 1834 and its administrative function in 1858. It was dissolved in 1874. Brian Gardner, The East India Company (1971) 202-204 and 290-298.
 2. See Appendix One. The figure for United Kingdom registered tonnage in 1816 was not surpassed until 1839.
 3. Instances of seamen begging in the streets of London may be found in the Minutes of Evidence taken before the 1815 Committee on the State of Mendicity in the Metropolis, BPP 1914-15 (473) III 246, 249, 276, 277 and 281.

charities were quite incapable of coping with the crisis,¹ and in the hard winter of 1817/18 the prolonged distress of the unemployed sailors was noted by William Wilberforce and Zachary Macauley.² They set up a Fund for the Relief of Distressed Mariners, but the committee of philanthropists that managed it soon came to realise that money doles were a mere palliative and that what was needed was comprehensive care for sick, diseased, injured and ill-nourished seamen.³ It was also appreciated that the nature of their occupation isolated sailors from the shore community and made them suspicious of shore institutions - notably hospitals. At a meeting held at the City of London Tavern on 8 March 1821 the problem was put in the following terms:

Sailors in general are bred up to their occupation from early youth and retain

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1. For example, although Trinity House maintained 144 almshouses and paid 7,012 pensions it was incapable of any rapid expansion, having built only twenty-eight houses in seven years. Accounts relating to the Trinity-House of Deptford Strond, BPP 1816 (408) XIX 152. The Merchant Seamen's Fund had no unemployment provisions, and pensions tended to be too small for even mere subsistence. The Keelman's Hospital on the Tyne and Trinity House at Hull had strictly local applications.
 2. William Wilberforce, (1759-1833), philanthropist and humanitarian, is best remembered for his work in connection with the abolition of slavery. Zachary Macauley, father of the great historian, was an ardent evangelical and a former governor of Sierra Leone.
 3. This group of philanthropists also founded the Destitute Sailors' Asylum in a Dock Street warehouse in 1827. This later became the Well Street Home, and then the Red Ensign Club. The institution, known to generations of seamen as 'Jack's Palace', closed in 1974 when the governing body negotiated a merger with the Marine Society - founded by Jonas Hanway in 1756 - and the Seafarers' Education Society.

few of the habits of persons employed on shore. Their great failing and principal occasion of all their misfortunes is an almost total absence of foresight and consideration for the morrow. They appear to have no conception of the possible approach of misery until it is too late to escape it and when at length they become subject to its visitation they are appalled and sink beneath its weight. If informed of or directed to hospitals, asylums, or other places of relief ashore ... they are unwilling to approach them and will submit to such receptacles only by extreme misery. A sailor, rather than repair to an hospital on shore will strip almost the last rag off his back for the means of obtaining a cure ... they will at any time prefer to remain on board their ships, even approaching death, rather than consent to being taken to an hospital on shore, although with the prospect of returning health.¹

The solution was a floating hospital moored in the Thames, and the newly-formed Seamen's Hospital Society induced the Admiralty to provide the Grampus for use as a hospital hulk. The ship was moored at Greenwich, and received its first ten patients on 25 October 1821. The accommodation soon proved insufficient, and in 1831 Grampus was replaced by Dreadnought, a Trafalgar veteran with room for 400 patients. The finances of the Society were put on a sound footing in 1832 when it received a legacy of £58,000 by the will of John Lydekker, a Lloyds broker, and its legal entity was established when it was incorporated in 1833.²

1. Minute Book of the Seamen's Hospital Society, 1821. Referred to hereafter as MBSHS with volume number and appropriate date.

2. By 3 Will 4 c 9.

In the following year, Parliament conferred quasi-official recognition by granting the Seamen's Hospital Society 5% of the income received by the Merchant Seamen's Fund.¹ The Dreadnought's position in the tide-way off Greenwich had been carefully chosen so that sick men could be taken aboard from ships passing up-river,² and her sides were inscribed in large letters:

'Seamen's Hospital
Supported by Voluntary Contributions
For Seamen of All Nations'

while she had special permission to fly the Jack and Pendant of a Royal Navy ship.³ Admission was on the basis of medical need alone; there was no discrimination on the ground of nationality or race, and no patient was discharged unless provision had been made for his future. Successive secretaries of the Seamen's Hospital Society were obliged to compile a statistical record of patients so as to show that these aims were being observed, and an edited version appears in Appendix Six and serves as source material for observations on the ethnic composition of the workforce in this and

1. It amounted to about £450 a year and was authorised by 4 & 5 Will 4 c 52.

2. A.G. McBride, The History of the Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital at Greenwich (SHS pamphlet, 1970) 9.

3. A privilege granted by Admiralty warrant in 1822.

later periods. In essence, it can be said that benign neglect by government was counterbalanced by philanthropic endeavour in the matter of hospital care at Britain's largest port, and it should be noted that when government associated itself with the Seamen's Hospital Society in the mid-1830s it cost nothing at all, for the £450 allocated annually thereafter from the Merchant Seamen's Fund came from the increased contributions of seamen themselves.¹

In the twentieth-century we have become accustomed to seeing case-law and union representations playing an important part in determining conditions at work, and in the first third of the nineteenth-century it is possible to discern the early threads of the process. In general, as late as 1838, the powers of a ships' master were held to be akin to those of a despot,² while the right to administer corporal punishment to maintain discipline was upheld in Lamb v. Burnett in 1831.³ However, some limit on arbitrary power over subordinates must always be desirable, and in Aitken v. Bedwell in 1827 a master and mate who ill-treated a sick seamen and hastened his death were convicted of manslaughter.⁴ The bare recital of the facts conceals

1. Seamen's sixpences, deducted from pay since 1696, became seamen's shillings in 1835, and masters had to pay two shillings monthly.

2. R. v. Leggett (1838) 8 C & P. 191, 194.

3. Lamb v. Burnett (1831) 1 Cr. & J. 291.

4. Aitken v. Bedwell (1827) 1 Moo. & M. 68.

rather than reveals the true import of these cases, for while they may seem to contradict each other a closer scrutiny removes doubt. In Lamb v. Burnett, a seaman who interfered when a shipmate was being flogged was himself beaten, and his suit for assault was dismissed because discipline had been threatened by reason of his interference. In the case of Aitken v. Bedwell discipline was not a strong factor because the sick man could not, rather than would not, obey and the action of the officers was mere brutality. Disciplinary requirements were paramount, but the Courts rejected tyranny. A different kind of discipline characterised the early efforts of coal-trade seamen to achieve standard wages, a 'closed shop' and a strong union in the decade after Waterloo.

Collier seamen were the only organised group of seafarers at the close of the Napoleonic wars when thousands of former naval men swelled the labour market and wage rates began to fall, and during the 1815 strike they stood out successfully for £5 a voyage and a manning scale of five men and a boy for every hundred tons of shipping.¹ The secretary of the Newcastle Ship-Owners Society testified in 1825 that the Tyne men had adopted 'sit-in' tactics by boarding their ships in port and letting go the anchors so that the vessels

1. See Stephen Jones, 'Community and Organisation - Early Seamen's Trade Unionism on the North East Coast, 1768-1844' Maritime History III No. 1 April 1973 for the background to the 1815 strike.

could not be moved. Shipping was held up for six weeks, and the authorities felt insecure enough to send for ten warships, 500 marines and four regiments of soldiers in support of the civil power.¹ The explanation behind this early successful exercise in industrial militancy is that in the north-east coal ports seamen tended to be a large element of the workforce and their role was crucial to the local economy. For example, in South Shields during the nineteenth-century half the labour force was engaged in coal-handling, a quarter were seamen, a tenth was engaged in shipbuilding and another tenth in allied trades.² Overt unionism was not possible, but sheer numbers won the day in 1815. One witness, a shipowner, told the 1825 Select Committee on the Combination Laws that the success of the 1815 strike had given the men confidence and a situation whereby there was no violence but 'a degree of regularity and quietness about the seamen in all their contests now which I never saw before'.³ The 1815 wage demand had been conceded, and the message for future generations was that in a close-knit community where seamen were one of the principal classes of workers and the brevity of voyages made united action possible, wage concessions

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1. Report of the Select Committee on the Combination Laws, BPP 1825 (437) IV 499. Minutes of Evidence, 166-167. Referred to hereafter as RSCCL 1825.
 2. J. Foster, 'Nineteenth-century towns: A Class Dimension'. Reproduced as chapter eight in the M.W. Flinn and T.C. Smout (eds.) Essays in Social History (Oxford, 1974) 187.
 3. RSCCL 1825, Minutes of Evidence 90.

could be obtained from employers with long-standing contractual obligations.¹ Other seafarers, notably those in long-distance trades, were employed atomistically and tended both to be out of touch with other seamen and sources of information ashore. They might be at sea for months, or even years, and were in the same position as agricultural labourers on isolated farms - a class of worker notoriously difficult to organise.² Mass unionisation of these seamen could not take place until the steam vessel grouped them in large numbers and permitted sufficient time ashore between voyages for making contact with union officials, comparing wages and conditions, discussing grievances and planning campaigns. Factory building was to be an essential element in forming unions ashore: the large steamship was its floating equivalent.

The repeal of the Combination Laws in 1824 meant that the existing informal unions could have an open and legal entity, and the principal organisation

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1. Numbers were crucial to the success or failure of strikes in this period. The strike of Post Office packet crews at Falmouth in 1810-11 was easily broken by the authorities who arrested two delegates sent to London and took the packet ships to Plymouth. The hundreds of ships and thousands of crewmen involved in the 1815 dispute made that type of solution impractical. See A.H. Norway, The Post Office Packet Service (1895) 206-221, for the background to this strike, which arose chiefly through attempts to check private trading by seamen.
 2. '... they cannot combine to raise wages because they are scattered, and if one alone refuses to work for low wages there are dozens out of work, or supported by the rates, who are thankful for the most trifling offer'. Frederick Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England (1974 edition) 290.

that emerged at the north-east ports was the Seamen's Loyal Standard Association. The Tyne and Wear branch members paid an initial subscription of 1/2d, an annual subscription of 1/- a year and 1d apiece whenever there was a claim. Widows of drowned seamen got a grant of £5, as did shipwrecked men who had lost all their clothes and effects. The Sunderland branch had more generous benefits, for after paying an initial subscription of 1/3d and the annual fee of 1/- members contributed 3d a man to provide £10 for widows or members losing their possessions by shipwreck. The Seamen's Loyal Standard Association was nominally a friendly society operating on orthodox lines, but there is evidence that it also enforced a 'closed shop' and advocated work-sharing. Some examples follow, all taken from the 1825 Select Committee Report. The majority of the crew of the Friendship refused to sign articles when two non-union men from Hull came aboard, and the matter was only resolved when they joined the union, while the son of the owner of the Emerald had to join the union when he sailed as mate in his father's ship. The union instructed men not to heave ballast, trim cargo, rig the ship or clean her bottom without extra pay, and circulated a pamphlet saying that ballast-heaving at sea was not only dangerous but took away the living of other workpeople, while trimming the cargo in port meant that the lighterman's livelihood was at risk. In short, the Seamen's Loyal Standard Association behaved very much as unions do in the twentieth-century, and the owners'

complaints also have a modern ring to them. They speak of wages being paid 'under intimidation of the union society', of being 'apprehensive that they (the unions) will increase in their demands every year' and that 'in consequence of the union of seamen we are not the directors or managers of our own property in any respect'.¹ The principal difference between then and now was that there was no open collective bargaining, for in these close-knit communities the men were always aware of current union-recommended wage rates.² Officials of the unions regularly gave evidence to committees of enquiry set up by central government,³ and towards the end of the century a national union emerged from one of these local unions on the north-east coast.

Sustained public and Board of Trade interest in the lot of merchant seamen can be dated from 1832 when The Nautical Magazine began to reproduce data on the number and frequency of shipwrecks. This publication was not presenting new information but information in a new form, for the distinctive feature was that the

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1. RSCCL 1825 529-530, 547-548 and Minutes of Evidence 87-114.
 2. A shipowner testified in 1825: 'It is not known with whom these demands originate, there is the mystery; but the demand is general on the part of seamen'. RSCCL 1825, Minutes of Evidence 88.
 3. Several gave evidence in 1825: Henry Woodruffe, secretary of the South Shields branch, was a particularly effective witness in 1836 when he appeared before the Select Committee on Shipwrecks.

wreck list that appeared monthly between March and December 1832 gave a consecutive number to each loss. When the December issue showed that 404 British ships had been lost in ten months it became apparent to the reading public that losses were disproportionately heavy - particularly as The Nautical Magazine followed the practice of printing the table of wrecks adjacent to a table of new constructions, and the latter was always smaller than the former. An article in the Edinburgh Review gave further publicity to the problem,¹ and when marine losses showed no sign of falling there was a call for a Select Committee enquiry on the subject. Fifteen members were appointed, and they included James Silk Buckingham, the reform Member for Sheffield, and Aaron Chapman and George Frederick Young representing the interests of shipowners.

The evidence given before the Committee was, to say the least, sensational, and the ensuing report extremely comprehensive.² Henry Woodruffe, secretary of the South Shields branch of the Seamen's Loyal Standard Association, said that one in four of all Tyne colliers had been lost in the preceding four years, and he blamed poor construction, overloading, the ineptitude of the numerous part-owners of vessels and the inexperience

1. 'On the Frequency of Shipwrecks' Edinburgh Review LX, 1834-35, 339-340.

2. Report of the Select Committee on Shipwrecks, BPP 1836 (567) XVII 373. Referred to hereafter as RSCS 1836.

of some masters for these losses. He cited the case of a butcher's assistant sent as master of an Archangel-bound ship, and the case of the Nathaniel Graham which was so poorly constructed that her cargo had to be jettisoned on the maiden voyage. This ship could not be caulked, and it later foundered with the loss of forty-one lives.¹ George Coleman, a teacher of navigation, gave evidence that the 279-ton ship Headleys on the Belfast-Quebec run had been commanded by a fourteen-year old boy, while another witness testified that a warehouse porter had been selected by owners to command a sea-going ship.² A naval officer, Captain Edward Brenton, quoted an instance of a ship's master who asked for a man to be sent aboard to take an observation of the sun, there being no competent navigator in the crew. Captain Brenton asked why this was so, and received the brusque reply 'you can have no profit if you do not run risks'.³ The Select Committee's principal conclusion was that although the number of person drowned at sea was about the same in 1833-35 as in 1816-18, the number of shipwrecks in which all hands had been drowned had risen from forty-nine to eighty-one. Marine disasters, it seemed, were more complete in the 1830s, and the cost to the nation was estimated to be 1,000 lives and £3m a year.⁴

1. RSCS 1836 408 and 411.

2. RSCS 1836 431 and 395.

3. RSCS 1836 592.

4. RSCS 1836 376.

Ten reasons were given in the Report of this Committee for the excessive number of shipwrecks. Only two of them related directly to crew conduct - the incompetence of masters and mates and the drunken habits of officers and men¹ - but when it came to remedies the majority were directed towards the 'improvement' of the calibre of seamen, their moral character, education, technical competence, sobriety and discipline. The Report had wandered away from the problem of shipwrecks, and Peter Parkhurst's (1962) interpretation of the evidence was that there were four principal causes of shipwreck, which were:

- (1) Defective construction.
- (2) Inadequate equipment.
- (3) Imperfect state of repair.
- (4) Improper and excessive loading.²

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1. Captain Edward Brenton thought that 95% of all punishments awarded at sea arose from drunkenness, and believed that a third of all merchant ship crews were 'disabled' by drink. The dockmaster at Liverpool had formed the opinion that nine-tenths of all shipping losses were due directly or indirectly to intemperance while John Pym, a shipping agent, testified that many seamen were brought to their ships in carts on sailing day, being too drunk to walk. Frequently, so many outward-bound seamen were paralytic through drink that it was a common practice for a scratch crew of riggers to take a ship out and anchor her while the crew sobered up. RSCS 1836 595, 588 and 603.
 2. P.G. Parkhurst, Ships of Peace (New Malden, 1962) 133.

Parkhurst seems to have missed the fifth cause - deficiencies in the system of marine insurance - and the Committee members also brushed it aside. The case against the insurance of unsurveyed ships had been put convincingly by James Ballingall, a surveyor, to the Select Committee, and in 1837 he made his points again in a contribution printed in The Nautical Magazine.¹ They were three in number. First, that although 100,000 tons of shipping had been lost in the last quarter of 1833 neither the underwriters nor the owners were out of pocket because the loss was passed on to the public. Second, that in many cases merchant ships were built so that they might speedily be lost and provide a quick profit. Third, that abuse of the marine insurance classification system accounted for three-quarters of all shipwrecks. The Committee appears to have taken the view that ships could not be refurbished as easily, and as cheaply, as men, and in the two decades following the 1836 Report most of the recommendations involving the workforce were put into effect.² Savings banks for the thrifty, the formation of a Marine Department at the Board of Trade, the certification of ships' officers and a tighter code of discipline all sprang from the 1836 Select Committee on Shipwrecks, although the early reformers found many obstacles in their way when they

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1. James Ballingall, 'Report of the Committee on Shipwrecks' The Nautical Magazine, May 1837, No. 5, 313-315.
 2. The notable exceptions were the compulsory uniforming of merchant service officers, a universal law of the sea and prohibition.

sought to implement the recommendations.

Buckingham submitted a Bill in 1837 to this end, but soon came to realise that he faced fierce opposition from both Poulett Thomson, President of the Board of Trade,¹ and the shipowners. Thomson did not oppose the Bill at its first reading, but said obliquely that it dealt with matters not susceptible to the legal process. Aaron Chapman and George Frederick Young objected to intervention by government in general, with Chapman deprecating the 'personal attachment of Honourable Members to Quixotic views' - a barbed reference to Buckingham's impassioned approach to the subject.² While the Bill was before the House the shipowners held their annual general meeting where Young spoke at great length to the effect that 'compulsory regulations ... would be subversive ... to the best interests of maritime commerce'.³ At its second reading on 7 June 1837 Buckingham's Bill was defeated by 150 votes after Poulett Thomson had spoken in support of the shipowning interest.⁴

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1. Charles Edward Poulett Thomson, (1799-1841), was MP for Dover and then Manchester from 1826-39. A passionate free-trader, and described in his DNB entry as both complacent and vain, he was briefly Governor-General of Canada immediately prior to his death. Poulett Thomson is best remembered for establishing a statistical department at the Board of Trade in 1832.
 2. Hansard 3 38 164-191.
 3. The Times, 22 March 1837.
 4. Hansard 3 38 1222-1227. This episode gives support for a contrary view to that of Lucy Brown, who believed that the shipowners were quiescent between 1835 and 1844. See her The Board of Trade and the Free Trade Movement (1958) 176.

Reform, when it came, was compelled by events which had the effect of shocking the early Victorians into an acceptance of government intervention in the interests of safety at sea, rather than in consequence of measured argument and leisurely debate.

This chapter has developed the theme that in the first third of the nineteenth-century the attitude of government towards the merchant service and its workforce was one of benign neglect. Some of the factors creating this attitude were exogenous - a general recession and a surplus of tonnage worldwide - and some reflected the prevailing view of the relationship between master and man. The administration's interest in the lot of merchant seamen was at a low level because of split departmental responsibility and Parliamentary quiescence. On the surface, the Navigation Acts with their characteristically mercantilist flavour dominated the world of shipping, but the creed of free trade - a dogma with much appeal for the dominant class of the first industrial nation - was in the ascendant. Where there were exceptions to the non-interventionist spirit of the times these exceptions have the character of special cases rather than significant departures from a trend. The protection given to lascars was a forced response, and although the 1836 Select Committee on Shipwrecks was a triumph for public opinion it was not possible to convert the good intentions it engendered into action. The law was strictly keyed to enforcing discipline, and unions could have only limited success

in special circumstances. The one important exclusion from this theme of benign neglect is the vigorous response of philanthropists to need, but that response owed nothing whatever to government.

CHAPTER THREE

SIGNS OF CHANGE, 1838 to 1851

The early years of Victoria's reign are commonly thought of, in G.N. Young's tart (1934) phrase, as an Age of Acquiescence where 'it seems as if all speculation had ceased; that there is an answer to every question, and usually the answer is no',¹ but the glib assurance implicit in the comment obscures the reality that this was a newly-literate society with strong emotions deriving from revived religiosity; that it was peculiarly susceptible to shock information,² and that it was capable of reacting vigorously given the right stimulus. In the last chapter it was shown that the 1836 Report of the Select Committee on Shipwrecks did not give rise to legislation immediately: in this chapter the point that first requires emphasis is that the instant reaction of Parliament and public to the recommendations made in the Report of the Select Committee on Shipwrecks of Timber Ships in 1839³ has a one-word explanation - cannibalism. That a thousand men should drown was not particularly remarkable, but that one of God's creations should be so reduced by hunger as to

1. G.M. Young, Victorian England; Portrait of An Age (Oxford, 1934) 17.

2. As, for example, presented to the reading public in the works of Charles Dickens.

3. BPP 1839 (333) IX 223. Referred to hereafter as RSCSTS 1839.

eat another stirred the early Victorians to swift action. The background information that led to both the 1836 Select Committee on Shipwrecks and the 1839 Select Committee on Shipwrecks of Timber Ships was of the same type: the results were markedly different.

Alexander Becher, the energetic editor of The Nautical Magazine, had continued to give publicity to losses at sea in the late 1830s, and in 1838 published an account of the wreck of the timber ship Caledonia the previous year. Ships in the North and Central American timber trade tended to sail in waters not used by other vessels,¹ and one result was that if they became water-logged so that the crew had to take shelter in the rigging it might be weeks or months before help came, and much suffering ensued. Becher gave the story of cannibalism in the Caledonia restrained treatment, but the eye-witness account of the wreck of the Whitby ship Earl of Moira² printed in the Commercial Gazette for January 1839, and later reproduced in the 1839 Report,³ was most explicit. The relevant extract reads:

I am sorry to have to report a most melancholy spectacle I witnessed on board the Earl Moira of Whitby, timber laden; we fell in with this vessel in lat. 45 deg. north, and longitude 21 deg. 54 mins west on the 19th of this month, water-logged and with only one mast standing; although there was a considerable sea at the time, we managed to get a boat alongside of her, and on

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1. For example: from Nova Scotian ports such ships would be north of the usual Atlantic trade routes, while those from Belize with mahogany would be to the southward.
 2. In some accounts the name of the vessel is given as the Earl of Murray.
 3. RSCSTS 1839 293.

going on board of her, found four men quite dead in a sail which they had hung up under the main-top to shelter themselves from the weather. Besides these, there was part of another cut up in pieces, and hung up just like meat in a butcher's stall. No doubt these poor fellows must have undergone the extremity of hunger before they were reduced to a necessity so revolting as to devour a fellow creature

The story was later confirmed by the master of the Sarah who told George Charles Smith, the secretary of the British and Foreign Seamen and Soldier's Friend Society, that he had sighted the Earl of Moira on the 30 November 1838 when ...

there were eight persons alive in the maintop; but the most horrible sight was one swinging and hung by the neck evidently as food for the rest. He had black whiskers, and his intestines had been taken out, and a piece of the shoulder was cut off.¹

The crew of the Sarah had been unable to get alongside to rescue these survivors, and two of the eight had been drowned before their horrified gaze as they tried to swim to safety.

A Select Committee was appointed on 9 April 1839 and it recommended on 18 June 1839 that deck-loads should be forbidden on vessels in the North Atlantic timber trade and that all merchant ships should be surveyed. The evidence regarding crew conditions and the state of vessels employed was such that this type of recommendation could hardly have been avoided. Charles Walton, a shipowner, testified that a tier of timber

1. RSCSTS 1839 Q.976.

2. Hansard 3 46 1302-1303.

was actually loaded into fo'c's'les in some vessels so that the crew had to sleep on wet wood, and Captain William Davis confirmed that this was the case in telling the Committee - 'Sailors do not like to go on a timber voyage if they can get a Mediterranean voyage on account of the wood coming into the bows of ship where the men lodge and their lying on wet timber'.¹ Seamen had only four feet of headroom in the fo'c's'les of many timber carriers: they could not sling their hammocks, and to save space the ships' stores were often crammed into the fo'c's'le as well as spare rope and ships' gear. Deckloads reached to the top of the bulwarks so that men moving about had to hold onto ropes, or spars jammed into the cargo, to keep a foothold. Seamen in the trade received an extra fifteen shillings a month because of 'hardship and suffering', and the casualty rate for vessels clearing loaded with timber from North American ports was 4% per voyage in 1836, 3% in 1837 and 6% in 1838.² The reasons for the high rate were that, as one shipowner admitted, 'the ships that go in the timber trade are worn out in other trades',³

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1. RSCSTS 1839 Q.614 and QQ.756-758. This is a reference to bow ports which opened to receive timber cargo, and which were often inadequately caulked.
 2. RSCSTS 1839 QQ.818-819, 534, 562 and iv. An examination of the Lloyds' List statistics for the period shows that the timber ship casualty rate was more than double that for all British merchant vessels.
 3. Evidence of Joseph Somes. RSCSTS 1839 Q.892.

and that they were under-ballasted, overloaded, held together with chains and cranky at sea because of excessive deckloads. Many were old East and West Indiamen long past their prime, and when deck cargoes were lashed down to ringbolts and made fast by ropes secured through the washports any heavy sea had the effect of lifting the planking and straining the bulwarks so that these vessels tended to leak inordinately in all weathers. From the economic point of view, a deckload was always a gamble on a North Atlantic passage; if it could be brought home there was up to 10% additional profit, if it had to be jettisoned to save the ship in a gale of wind the whole enterprise could fail.¹

A Bill was brought in shortly after the publication of the 1839 Report, and the Timber Ships British North American Act² was passed on 17 August 1839 - just eighteen weeks after the matter had been first raised in the House. The matter of compulsory and universal survey had been quietly dropped, as had a total ban on deckloads, and the Act was wholly concerned to prohibit the carrying of deckloads across the North Atlantic in the months of winter. During the next year a similar prohibition was made in respect of timber cargoes from Central America,³ and these minor pieces of legislation represent the first safety laws put into effect to

1. RSCSTS 1839. Notably QQ.890-941 and Q.535.

2. 2 & 3 Vic c 44.

3. 3 & 4 Vic c 36.

protect British seamen. Comprehensive reform was not politically acceptable in the late 1830s, but early in the next decade a shift of informed opinion can be detected, for which credit must go to Robert Fitzroy who was particularly concerned about the professional expertise of deck officers.¹ In 1842 Fitzroy led a deputation of Members of Parliament to meet the Earl of Ripon, then President of the Board of Trade, to urge the certification of ships' officers - as recommended in the 1836 Report of the Select Committee on Shipwrecks - but was told that further evidence would be required before any measure could be considered.² Nothing daunted, he introduced a Bill on 28 July 1842 outlining a system of examinations for merchant ship officers, but this time William Ewart Gladstone, the Vice-President of the Board of Trade,³ said that the shipowners were divided on the issue and the Bill was merely printed and circulated as a discussion document.⁴ On 24 February 1843 Fitzroy tabled a question in the House as to whether any legislation was pending on certification, and Gladstone replied that the Select Committee on Shipwrecks, set up

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1. Vice-Admiral Robert Fitzroy, (1805-65), had commanded the Beagle during Darwin's expeditions and was MP for Durham from 1841. According to his DNB entry, he was arrogant, dictatorial and had an excitable temperament.
 2. The Times, 14 March 1842.
 3. William Ewart Gladstone, (1809-1898), the well-known statesman, was a Tory at this time, but is best remembered as an outstanding Liberal Prime Minister.
 4. Hansard 3 65 764-767.

eight days earlier, would be in a position to consider the matter.¹ Fitzroy was not satisfied with this answer and determined to obtain data to back his call for compulsory certification. He induced a friend, James Murray, who was a Foreign Office official, to put out a circular letter to British consuls abroad seeking their opinion of British shipmasters.

This circular letter² was couched in terms calculated to produce the desired result, for part of it read -

I am particularly desirous of gaining information in regard to instances which have come under your observation of the incompetency of British shipmasters ... My object is to show the necessity for authoritative steps

The officials responded predictably. Consul Crowe at Hammerfest thought that British merchant captains were 'the most ignorant, illiterate and brutal set to be met with', while his colleague at Danzig reported that 'Only recently a master left his vessel, which was loaded with a valuable cargo and ready for sea, and was, after several day's search, found in a brothel!' The Consul in the Azores supplied a table that attempted to show that visiting shipmasters could be classified under four headings ranging from 'of sober habits and acquainted with the mode of ascertaining longitude' down to 'of intemperate habits and not acquainted with

1. Hansard 3 66 1277.

2. Papers relating to the Commercial Marine of Great Britain, BPP 1847-48 (913) LIX 141. Referred to hereafter as Murray's Circular 1843.

the mode of ascertaining longitude', but the value of his contribution was diminished by the revelation that the sober navigators had lost four ships in the past four years while the drunken incompetents had suffered no losses.¹ Consul Hunt's table proved only that smaller vessels tended to be commanded by drunken incompetents. The representative at Genoa said that it was quite common for a visiting captain to 'take up his abode in a tavern',² but agreed with his colleague in the Cape Verde Islands that as a general rule a sober master made for a sober crew. Consul Scott at Bordeaux reported that the master of a Yarmouth schooner had been jailed for robbing a woman of the town, while his opposite number in Rio de Janeiro cited the case of a master who drank himself to death in the space of four months.³ The whole mass of material was sent by Murray to Charles Canning, the Foreign Secretary, with a covering letter dated 1 January 1844 urging the creation of a single regulating board for the merchant service with the duty of examining officers as to their competence.⁴

Murray's papers circulated among members of

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1. Murray's Circular 1843, 17, 30 and 79.
 2. Murray's Circular 1843, 79-81. Frank Bullen quotes a case where the master of a ship in the colonial trade not only spent all his time in port lodging in a public house, but also tried to bilk the landlady and was forced to pay up by a bailiff. Frank T. Bullen, The Log of a Sea-Waif (1910) 274-275.
 3. Murray's Circular 1843, 79-81 and 128.
 4. Murray's Circular 1843, iii.

the government, and although the Admiralty found the consul's reports over-pessimistic¹ Gladstone had to bow to pressure from Fitzroy's lobby in March 1844 when he agreed to look into the question of legislation.² When another friend of Fitzroy's, Lord Ingestre, asked in the House of Lords on 9 August 1844 if it was intended to introduce a measure for the examination of masters and mates of merchant vessels, the reply was that the Admiralty intended to set up an examination board 'immediately'.³ Meanwhile, the Board of Trade was examining the evidence given in the 1843 First Report from the Select Committee on Shipwrecks,⁴ which contained arguments for both voluntary and compulsory examinations and certification. The key witnesses were Alexander Becher of The Nautical Magazine and Captain John Washington, commander of a survey vessel. Becher proposed voluntary graded examinations for the various positions of responsibility in merchant ships to be conducted by experienced shipmasters based at the leading seaports. Captain Washington was asked 'have you any suggestion to offer for the prevention of shipwrecks?' and produced the shortest and most succinct

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1. Admiralty letter to the Board of Trade dated 20 February 1844 and quoted by Peter Parkhurst in Ships of Peace 149-150.
 2. The Times, 28 March 1844.
 3. Hansard 3 76 1996.
 4. First Report from the Select Committee on Shipwrecks. BPP 1843 (549) IX 1. Referred to hereafter as FRSCS 1843.

reply in the form of - 'To make masters and mates pass an examination'. The Select Committee recommended local, voluntary tests of competence, and an Order in Council instituted a system of voluntary examinations conducted by local boards in August 1845.¹

It soon transpired that the voluntary examination system was a failure. A mere handful of deck officers sat these examinations in 1846 and 1847² and the Board of Trade asked the Foreign Office to conduct a second poll of consular officials on the lines of Murray's Circular of 1843. The consuls reported that the situation was little changed,³ and at this juncture the Fitzroy faction acquired an unexpected ally. Henry Labouchère,⁴ who became President of the

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1. FRSCS 1843 Q.150 and iv. PRO BT/1 473. Patrick Colquhoun, the founder of the Thames police force, had been advocating tests for competency at the beginning of the century. See his A Treatise on the Commerce and Police of the River Thames (1800) 164. The East India Company had examinations for officers, as did the Royal Mail Line. Sunderland was one of the north-east ports that conducted local, and informal, tests of competence before seafarers were advanced to a higher rank - see FRSCS 1843 43 and 121. Voluntary examinations were no novelty, and there was no opposition to the scheme. It was to be a different story when examination became mandatory and the jobs of the unqualified were at risk.
 2. Return of Masters and Mates passing the voluntary examination and obtaining Certificates of Qualification, BPP 1850 (319) LIII 349.
 3. Only three of the sixty-five consuls contacted saw any signs of improvement. Their replies are contained in the same volume as the replies to Murray's Circular 1843 - BPP 1847-48 LIX.
 4. Henry Labouchère, (1798-1869), MP for Taunton, was a landowner of Huguenot descent who is chiefly remembered for bringing about the repeal of the Navigation Acts in 1849.

Board of Trade for the second time in July 1847, was a late convert to the doctrine of intervention, having come to appreciate that reform of the merchant service was a necessary adjunct to maintaining the nation's competitive edge in a developing free trade situation. At his instigation, the Permanent Secretary of the department drew up a memorandum recommending, among other things, that no ship of 250 tons and upwards should be granted clearance unless it had certificated officers on board.¹ This recommendation was embodied in the 1850 Act,² with s.7 establishing Local Marine Boards with the duty of examining masters and mates and issuing certificates of competency. The link between deckload legislation and the certification of ships' officers may, at first, appear to be tenuous, but the recommendations of the First Report from the Select Committee on Shipwrecks in 1843 had centred on these two issues. The Report had concluded that the 1839 and 1840 legislation on deckloads in timber ships had saved about 200 lives, and it suggested an extension of the

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1. Peter Parkhurst's (1962) interpretation was that this memorandum was a 'revelation' to Labouchère, but the internal evidence is that the latter instigated the document. Free trade demanded discipline from its participants, and Labouchère himself had 'no abstract reverence for a system of centralization' but wished to 'elevate the position and raise the character of sailors'. Peter Parkhurst, Ships of Peace 154-166: Hansard 3 112 111 (20 June 1850), and Hansard 3 108 676 (11 February 1850).
 2. 13 & 14 Vic c 93. The measure is commonly referred to as the Mercantile Marine Act, 1850.

ban on cargoes of this type together with the certification of masters and mates to save many more.¹ G.M. Young's Age of Acquiescence was over, and had given way to an era of enlightened self-interest where a future Prime Minister with landed interests could declare that commerce was the emancipator of the age.² Humanitarian and practical considerations had come together, but the irony is that Robert Fitzroy, who had begun the agitation for certification, had the mortification of seeing his ideas implemented by others and his material used by Labouchère to persuade the shipowners to accept the repeal of the Navigation Laws.³

At this point in the study it is necessary to pause and acknowledge that while the groundswell of informed opinion was reformist in character the reformers did not have it all their own way. Successes in areas such as certification and deckloads must be balanced by losses and retreats in other spheres, and the mutability of the decision-makers may best be demonstrated by looking in detail at the Act of 1844 and seeing what happened to the Merchant Seamen's Fund. It will be

1. FRSCS 1843 iii.

2. Hansard 3 75 170. 3 June 1844. The speaker was Lord John Russell, (1792-1878), a Whig politician whose handling of the Irish famine, the unrest of 1848 and the Crimean War brought him little approval from contemporaries and historians. His father was the Duke of Bedford.

3. Labouchère's publication of the consular material of 1843 and 1847 was to this end. See Hansard 3 96 671-672. 15 February 1848.

recalled that welfare provision for old, sick or disabled sailors was, in general, achieved through the medium of payments from the Merchant Seamen's Fund. Founded in 1747,¹ the Fund was 'beset by financial and administrative difficulties' in the early decades of the nineteenth-century 'and as the seagoing force grew larger it became increasingly unable to cope with the demands made upon it'.² The workforce grew by about a third between 1836 and 1846,³ and although seamen were paying a shilling a month into the Fund after 1835 instead of the traditional sixpence it became actuarially unsound for three main reasons. The Act of 1834⁴ made Scots and Irish seamen eligible for pensions, and granted awards to widows so that by 1843 seamen's widows comprised over half of the pension list.⁵ Money was collected centrally, but disbursed locally, so that the greatest demand, and the smallest pension payments, were at the north-east ports where ageing seamen and young boys manned the coal fleet. Third, the Fund's greatest

1. By 20 Geo 2 c 38.

2. Jon Press, 'The Collapse of a Contributory Pension Scheme: The Merchant Seamen's Fund, 1747-1851'. The Journal of Transport History (New Series) V, No. 2 (September 1979) 94.

3. Appendix Three shows that the (corrected) rise in the workforce between 1836 and 1846 is of the order of 32%, from some 121,000 in the former year to almost 160,000 in the latter.

4. 4 & 5 Will 4 c 52.

5. Report of the Select Committee on the Merchant Seamen's Fund, BPP 1844 (431) VIII 437-440. Referred to hereafter as RSCMSF 1844.

deficiency was that it was unable to provide pensions sufficient to maintain even the most modest standards in old age. Evidence given to the 1840 Select Committee on the Merchant Seamen's Fund had made this last point clear. The secretary of the Seamen's Loyal Standard Association at South Shields thought that £20 a year was the least sum on which a retired seamen could subsist, while William Watson, the secretary of the Merchant Seamen's Fund, testified that the London level of pensions was of the order of £10 a year for a retired master, between £4 and £7 for disabled seamen and £2-10s to £4 for widows.¹ In the outports pensions were less generous. Dartmouth seamen got £1-10s a year, and the highest recorded amount was £13 a year.² The coasting ports, particularly those in the north-east, had a payment level of around 3/- a month, and although the Select Committee condemned unequal payments it did not recommend corrective legislation and the Board of Trade did not initiate any.³

On 5 February 1844 Gladstone, by now the President of the Board of Trade in Peel's administration, launched a further enquiry into the state of the Fund. He said in the House of Commons that seamen were at one

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1. Report from the Select Committee on the Merchant Seamen's Fund, BPP 1840 (617) XIII Q.855 and QQ.12-20. Referred to hereafter as RSCMSF 1840.
 2. RSCMSF 1840 Q792 and ix.
 3. RSCMSF 1840 xi. In the 1844 debate, Labouchère was to claim that he had wanted legislation in 1840, and he urged the Peel government to take up its responsibilities. Like many politicians before and since, Labouchère had a conveniently short memory.

and the same time a class which had strong claims on the sympathy of Parliament but were least in the habit of approaching it with an expression of opinion.¹ He indicated that the basic financial structure and administration of the Fund was deficient, and much of the evidence to the 1844 Select Committee tended to confirm that judgement. Contributors were said to be 'in no better position than paupers who have not contributed to any fund', and James Fildes, a former mate and secretary of the Shipmaster's and Seamen's Guardian Society at Glasgow, made the significant observation that from the sailors' point of view there was little check on the proper use of the money collected and disbursed. This early advocate of workers' control alleged that evasion was widespread, cited a case of fraud where a master had made deductions from his crew's wages for four years and pocketed the proceeds, and urged that the Fund be managed by contributing members - as with friendly societies such as the Druids and Oddfellows - rather than by committees consisting largely of shipowners and merchants.² Some simple calculations can be made to estimate the parameters of evasion and

1. Hansard 3 72 257-260.

2. RSCMSF 1844 Q.375 and QQ.1702-1844. The John and Mary fraud to which he made reference is one of the few cases on record, but it will be shown that, despite the claim of Ralph Davis in his (1956) article on 'Seamen's Sixpences' published in Economica that 'It is difficult to see why evasion should have been widespread', evasion was indeed quite extensive.

fraud. In 1838 the Fund received £47,285,¹ and as it is known from other sources that at this period a seaman could only rely, at best, on getting nine months of work a year² the maximum size of the workforce should be of the order of 105,000 men. In fact, the (adjusted) figure for 1838 is around 125,000 men, and by those criteria the extent of fraud and evasion may be put at about 16%. In 1844 the government actuary said that the average contribution made by merchant seamen was five shillings a man a year,³ and as he was employing the Board of Trade's figure of 175,691 men to obtain this mean it can be said that the Fund was producing just under £44,000 in that year. The (adjusted) workforce total for 1844 in Appendix Three is just under 150,000 men, and with 98,000 full contributions received the maximum shortfall is about a third. The best estimate, therefore, of fraud and evasion in relation to Merchant Seamen's Fund contributions is that perhaps one in four payments was either not made or not trans-

1. RSCMSF 1840 Q.317.

2. William Watson, secretary of the Merchant Seamen's Fund, had said so in 1840 - RSCMSF 1840 Q.237 - and the actuary who drew up a report in 1850 that led to the winding-up of the Fund was also emphatic on the point. 'This contribution, from the nature of the service, is in practice payable but for nine months of the year, the sailor, on an average, being employed for no longer period of the twelvemonth'. Report from A.G. Finlayson to the Right Honourable Henry Labouchère on the Merchant Seamen's Fund, BFP 1850 (178) LIII 367. Referred to subsequently as Finlayson's Report 1850.

3. RSCMSF 1844 Q.473.

mitted to the Fund's officials.

The Report of the 1844 committee was more forthright than that of 1840. It was suggested that two types of pension be paid in future - one of about £4 a year for men able to work ashore although disabled for sea service, and one of about £12 a year for men over sixty-three years of age and unable to work at all. It was acknowledged that a shilling a month provided an inadequate basis for a pension scheme, and the remedies suggested were to tighten up accounting procedures and make apprentices pay sixpence a month.¹ Legislation was recommended. However, by the time the Royal Commission of 1847/48 had finished its work the whole attitude of government towards the scheme had changed. It was now generally agreed that the Merchant Seamen's Fund was inequitable, inefficient and under-financed, and that bankruptcy could not be staved off for long. As an interim measure, an annual payment of a shilling per registered ton by shipowners to Trinity House was proposed so that the Fund could be kept going for the five years considered necessary to wind it up.²

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1. This would have raised just under £5,000 in 1845 if it is assumed that all apprentices contributed for twelve months of the year - see Appendix Five. That sum could not have saved the Fund from insolvency.
 2. Report of the Royal Commission on the Merchant Seamen's Fund. BPP 1847-48 (931) XXVIII vii. Referred to hereafter as RRCMSF 1847-48. Peter Parkhurst believed that the Fund had been almost totally supported by shipowners since the 1830s and the change to ownership by limited companies ruined the scheme, but he does not back his contention with evidence, and the (1979) view of Jonathan Press that the Fund failed because the number of seamen - and contributions - went up by about a third between 1833 and 1843 while the number of claimants increased by 121% seems more credible. See Parkhurst's Ships of Peace 130 and the Press article 'Collapse of a Contributory Pension Scheme' 94-95.

The alternative after the Fund was wound up was, in the best Samuel Smiles tradition, that seamen should become contributors to a friendly society - the United Seamen's, Widows and Orphans Benefit Society, but it transpired that while a few seamen - mainly masters - joined the Society some 95% did not, and a welfare gap was created that was not wholly bridged until 1911 when s.48 of the National Insurance Act established an insurance and pension scheme for all seafarers. The demise of the Merchant Seamen's Fund was inevitable because it was a scheme with an employee contribution of merely 2-3% of gross income, and when the government actuary reported in 1850 on the Fund he emphasised the point strongly.¹ The Finance Department of the Board of Trade took over the administration of pensions being paid to existing beneficiaries,² and the Seamen's Fund Winding-Up Act of 1851³ formally ended this early pension scheme that had been in existence for just over a century.

While the Merchant Seamen's Fund was dying a lingering death, the Peel administration was piloting

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1. Finlayson's Report 1850 4-6. Alexander Glen Finlayson (or Finlaison) was employed by both H.M. Customs and the National Debt Office at the time.
 2. The Board of Trade managed the Fund with some skill. In 1863/64, for example, they had managed to peg the rates at £6-16s a year for a retired master and £1-2s for orphaned children. Papers Relating to the Merchant Seamen's Fund, BPP 1865 (271) L 270.
 3. 14 & 15 Vic c 102.

through a measure that may fairly be described as the last of the Acts effecting the sailors' lot based on eighteenth-century concepts. The 1850 Act was a pragmatic recognition that 'the regeneration of our mercantile navy had become absolutely necessary':¹ the 1844 Act 'to amend and consolidate the laws relating to Merchant Seamen; and for keeping a Register of Seamen'² was the last in a series with the primary intention of ensuring that merchant seamen could be called on readily for naval service in times of war. It was the Admiralty's last major legal intervention, for in 1853 it introduced continuous service with the result that merchant ship crews were no longer regarded as the fleet's chief recruiting ground. By s.20 of the 1844 Act all seamen had to hold register tickets, and the issue of discharge certificates was made mandatory so as provide a check on the authenticity of register tickets.³ There was a switch of responsibility to the Admiralty in the field of welfare, with that body given the duty of devising a scale of medicines to be carried in merchant ships, of relieving lascars in distress and paying the running costs of the General Register Office of Seamen set up by Graham's Act of 1835.⁴

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1. Hansard 3 108 678. From W.S. Lindsay's speech on 11 February 1850 during the debate on the 1850 Bill.
 2. 8 Vic c 112.
 3. The first sentence of the model discharge certificate reproduced in Schedule E of the Act had a space for the insertion of the register ticket number.
 4. Sections 18, 64 and 19 respectively of the 1844 Act.

The old device of compulsory apprenticeship, so typical of previous Admiralty-inspired legislation, was revived by ss. 32 and 37, and s.6 said that failing to join a ship, or deserting from one, were now equally punishable by thirty days' imprisonment. The whole tone of the Act was, with one exception, regressive, but within the decade that followed practically every one of its provisions was either amended, modified or repealed.

The register ticket scheme was an almost immediate casualty. Seamen traded their tickets freely, changed names with every voyage and gave false particulars as a matter of course. The register tickets were issued without check or query so that in an 1850 debate a Member could say that 'tickets might be got of any crimp for half-a-crown' and not be contradicted by an official spokesman.¹ Consequently, s.32 of the 1850 Act gave the Board of Trade power to wind-up the register ticket scheme, and in 1853 the Board abolished it. Compulsory apprenticeship provisions were widely evaded,² and desertion soon became a serious problem for mainly economic

1. Hansard 3 112 1372-1375.

2. William James Lamport, the Liverpool shipowner, testified in 1860 that when he had been at sea it was common practice to borrow 'mock-apprentices' to exhibit at the Custom House or produce old indentures to persuade officials that ships' boys were genuine apprentices. Report from the Select Committee on Merchant Shipping, BPP 1860 (530) XIII QQ.2601-2621. Referred to hereafter as RSCMS 1860. A glance at Appendix Five will confirm that the number of indentured apprentices fell dramatically once the legal constraints were removed on owners.

reasons. In 1847, when the American-Mexican war was at its height, seamen arriving at New Orleans were being offered bounties of \$70 in gold pieces to serve as soldiers in Mexico - an event immortalized in a shanty which records the eagerness of seamen to reach that fabled land:

So we'll heave her up, and away we go.
Heave away, Santy Anno.¹
Heave her up and away we go,
All on the plains of Mexico.

while the discovery of gold in California and Australia between 1849 and 1852 led to mass desertion in both countries.² However, this type of desertion was atypical because it sprang from temporary temptation: far more important in the long run was desertion from one ship to join another at higher wages, for this factor will be shown to be paramount when seeking to establish why men deserted and where the act generally took place.³

The disparity between wages in British and

1. General Santa Anna led the Mexican forces at the battles of Buena Vista and Cerro Gordo during the war with the United States. Seamen have always believed that when they pulled on a rope someone at their destination was pulling at the other end - hence the enduring expression that 'the Liverpool girls have the tow-rope' employed by homeward-bounders today.
2. In mid-1850 some 500 ships were immobilized in San Francisco Bay because the crews had gone off to the diggings. San Francisco Examiner 13 July 1850.
3. 'By and large, desertions occurred in areas where wages offered to crew were higher than average'. Lewis Fischer, 'A Dereliction of Duty: The Problem of Desertion on Nineteenth-Century Sailing Vessels', Rosemary Ommer and Gerald Panting (eds.), Working Men Who Got Wet (St. John's, Newfoundland, 1981).

North American ships was considerable, and arose from two main causes. There was a greater overall demand for labour in North America, and the boom in soft-wood shipbuilding there led to a strong demand for crews to deliver these newly-constructed vessels to the European market. In 1847 a British official told the Royal Commission on the Merchant Seamen's Fund that 'Nearly all the men who now go to Quebec and New Brunswick desert: they get £12 to £14 for the voyage home per month'.¹ The Report of the Royal Commission said that three-fifths of all deserters 'ran' in North America,² and the Canadian authorities set up a shipping office in Quebec in 1847 to combat the problem. It had almost instant success, with the desertion figure at the port of Quebec falling from 3,058 men in 1847 to 1,333 in 1849,³ but the wage disparity in a 1:5 or 1:6 ratio continued to provide a powerful incentive to the would-be deserter. Appendix Seven shows that the desertion rate between 1845 and 1855 was remarkably unaffected by any government measures, for although the penalties for desertion were tripled in 1850⁴ and signing-on

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1. RRCMSF 1847-48 QQ.26-27. The usual transatlantic rate for ABs was £2-5s a month at this date - see PRO BT/1 479.
 2. RRCMSF 1847-48 Appendix Seven.
 3. Figures given by Labouchère to the House of Commons during the debate on the first version of the 1850 Mercantile Marine Act. Hansard 3 108 674-675.
 4. By s.70 of the Mercantile Marine Act of 1850 the maximum penalty for desertion was raised to twelve weeks' imprisonment. During the debate on the Bill the President of the Board of Trade, Henry Labouchère, had rejected an attempt to substitute fines for imprisonment, saying that fines were useless because they would be paid out of the greatly enhanced earnings to be gained by deserting British ships in order to sign on colonial vessels. See Hansard 3 112 1444-1452 and CJ 105 538.

at Mercantile Marine Offices became the common practice in the same year, the desertion rate remained, apart from explicable 'peaks' in 1847 and 1853,¹ at around 10,000 desertions a year. Seamen were responding to the push and pull of supply and demand, and the industry in which they were employed was about to respond similarly to the end of centuries of protectionist legislation based on defence needs and to enter a new era of unbridled competition.

The repeal of the Navigation Acts in 1849² has generally been interpreted as either the triumph of the Whigs over the Tories or of free trade over protectionism,³ but its importance in the present context is that it fundamentally changed the ethnic basis of the workforce. From 1660 shipowners and masters had to crew their vessels, except in wartime, with a minimum of 75% of British seamen,⁴ but with the dawning of the second half of the nineteenth-century all such restrictions were removed. It will be shown that at the end of the century labour dilution was considerable,⁵ but

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1. The Mexican-American war and the Australian gold-rush may be held to account for the higher figures during these years.
 2. It was not a total repeal: the coasting trade remained protected until 1854, and the manning requirement did not disappear until 1853 when it was formally abolished by s.31 of 16 & 17 Vic c 131.
 3. The first interpretation is that of R.H. Thornton in British Shipping 42-43: the second is that of Asa Briggs in The Age of Improvement (1974 edition) 393.
 4. By s.7 of the 1660 Navigation Act.
 5. The 1901 Census showed that 35% of the seamen employed on a particular day were lascars or foreigners. Return of the Number, Ages, Ratings and Nationalities of the Seamen employed on the 31st day of March 1901. BPP 1902 (Cd.1342) XCII 283.

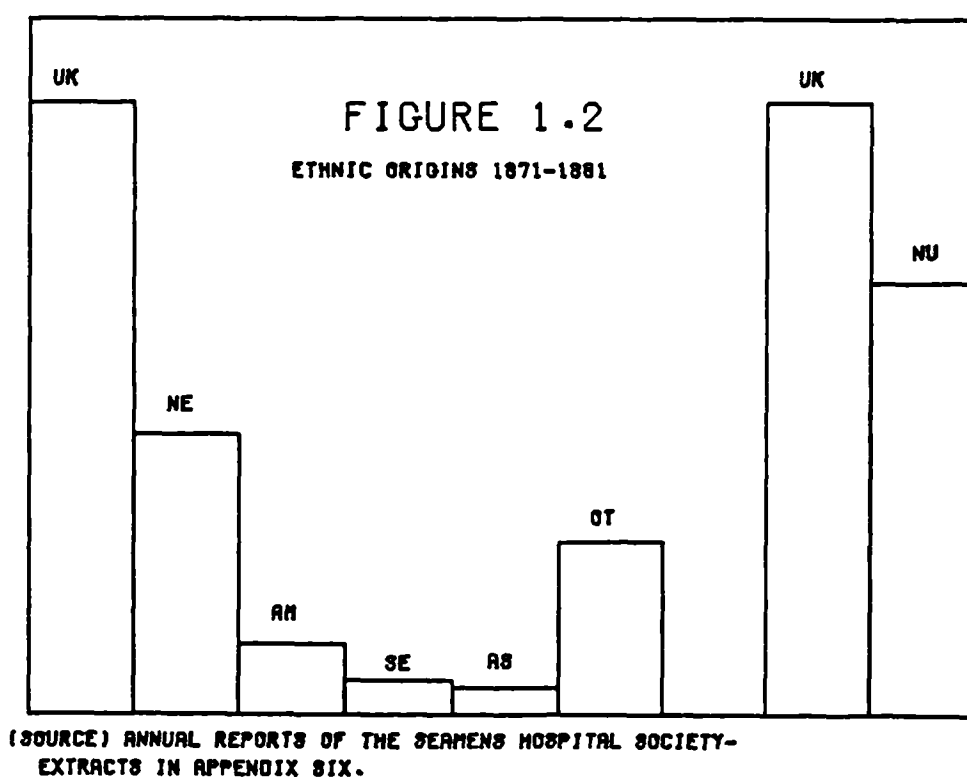
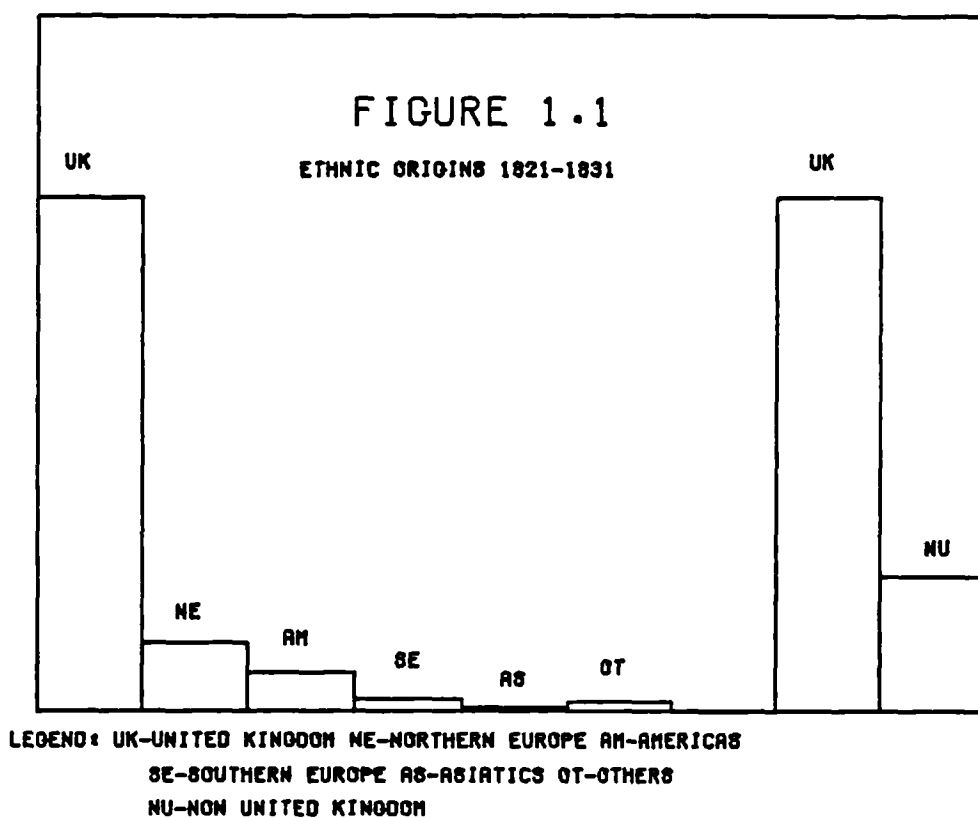
it must first be established that the Navigation Laws had worked in the way that was intended prior to the middle of the nineteenth-century. There are no official statistics for the number of foreign seamen serving in British ships before 1851,¹ but a random sample of seamen seeking hospital treatment in London has been extracted from the records of the Seamen's Hospital Society, which date from 1821. In Figure 1.1 overleaf it may be seen that in the period 1821-31 some 79% of the sample were of British origin; 'others' amounting to 21%. In Figure 1.2 dealing with the period 1871-81 the British component of the sample amounts to 59% and 'others' to 41%.² Such a sample is, of course, not perfect,³ but it shows that about four out of five hospitalized seamen in the port of London were of British origin in the 1820s and that the Navigation Acts had succeeded in their purpose of keeping up the number of such seamen for defence reasons. Similarly, the percentage fell to three out of five when the requirement was withdrawn. Quantity could be assured by legislation: quality was another matter, and in the years following 1849 that aspect

1. See Appendix Three.

2. The figures have been extracted from the Annual Reports of the Seamen's Hospital Society, and are reproduced in Appendix Six.

3. It would include British seamen serving under a foreign flag and foreigners serving under both British and foreign flags, but in the latter case the sample overestimates the number of foreign seamen and does not weaken the principal conclusion.

ETHNIC ORIGINS OF SEAMENS HOSPITAL SOCIETY PATIENTS, 1821-31 AND 1871-81



became of great concern to the legislators and civil servants. At mid-century, the quality can only be described as indifferent. Two Maltese officials, reporting in 1849, struck just the right note in referring to the 'recklessness of sailors, their ignorance and credibility, their want of forethought added to habits of dissipation (which) render them liable to every species of loss and robbery',¹ while the 1847-48 Report of the Royal Commission on the Merchant Seamen's Fund believed that there was 'a necessity for treating them as if they were children of the State',² and even William Schaw Lindsay - ever a friend to the British seaman - thought that seamen behaved childishly because they tended to 'roam from one ship to another, not always tempted by an increase in wages, but often incited by a pure love of change'.³ A package of remedies to cure these ills was prescribed in the Mercantile Marine Act of 1850, and as that measure may fairly be described as the first of the significant pieces of maritime labour legislation in the nineteenth-century it will be looked at in some detail.

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1. Report of the Superintendent of Quarantine and Marine Police and the Inspector of Charitable Institutions and Prisons to the Governor of Malta. Dated 27 July 1849: a copy may be found on PRO BT/1 477 561/1850.
 2. RRCMSF 1847-48. Paragraph 26 of the Report.
 3. RSCMS 1860 xxx. This phrase was drafted by Lindsay, and it appears unchanged in the Report.

The repeal of the Navigation Acts and the passage of the Mercantile Marine Act of 1850 were both attended by remarkable Parliamentary activity and extensive debate.¹ In the latter case, the Act that eventually emerged was a second version with fifty altered clauses, seven deleted clauses and thirteen new ones.² When Henry Labouchère introduced his amended version on 20 June 1850 he emphasised that it now 'had the support and consent of the great body of ship-owners' and that its purpose was principally to supervise ships' officers more strictly, control the engagement of crew through shipping offices³ and prevent desertion.⁴ The preamble to the Act showed its stern intentions. 'Whereas it is expedient', it began, 'to make Provision for improving the Condition of Masters, Mates and Seamen,' and then the blunt purpose: 'and for maintaining Discipline in the British Merchant Service'. The Act's improvemental aspect was limited. It authorized

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1. The third reading of the Navigation Bill gave rise to a Lord's Protest - a rare expression of strong feeling. Prepared by Lord Stanley and supported by forty-two peers, the Protest was to the effect that repeal would weaken the navy because 'the royal navy is mainly dependent for its efficiency on the commercial marine'. The date was 12 June 1849, and Hansard 3 66 22 and James E. Thorold Rogers' Protests of the Lords (1885) iii 263 should be consulted for a full account.
 2. The first Bill, introduced by Labouchère on 11 February 1850, was withdrawn on 20 April 1850. CJ 105 243.
 3. S.7 established Local Marine Boards at ports with more than 30,000 tons of registered shipping, and s.35 gave Boards the responsibility for opening shipping offices.
 4. Hansard 3 112 108-121.

the establishment of sailors' homes on shore - as recommended in the 1836 Report of the Select Committee on Shipwrecks - and set a minimum standard for living space.¹ The Board of Trade took over nominal responsibility for medicine chests from the Admiralty,² and the compulsory certification of ships' officers may be seen as conferring on them an enhanced status. However, the means by which certification was to be accomplished can hardly be put into an improvemental category. Voting for membership of Local Marine Boards, who would have the duty of conducting examinations and granting certificates of competency, was partly contingent on ownership of registered tonnage, for half the seats were filled by votes at elections where each voter had to show ownership of 250 tons of shipping, and the owner of 2,500 tons had ten votes. Local Marine Boards would also control the shipping office where men signed-on,³ and s.28 gave these Boards the right to suspend or cancel officers' certificates. A great deal of power was placed in the hands of shipowners, and it was reinforced by increases in the maximum penalties for desertion, stealing stores, broaching the cargo, damaging the vessel, assaulting officers, continued wilful disobedience, neglect of duty, impeding navigation or delaying the voyage. For all these offences, the full

1. SS. 43 and 63.

2. By s.61. As will be shown later, it would be many years before the Board of Trade took up its full responsibility in respect of the supply of medicines on merchant ships.

3. SS. 9, 24, 26 and 35.

penalty became twelve weeks' imprisonment.¹

The reaction to the 1850 Bill was initially universally hostile, with the owners claiming that it was too lenient and the men that it was tyrannical. The Glasgow Shipowners Association wanted to retain register tickets and increase the maximum penalty for desertion to six months' imprisonment with hard labour,² while the Liverpool Ship Owners Association objected to the Board of Trade's new powers, to shipping offices, to over-documentation and to the clause giving men twelve superficial feet of living space.³ Some 6,000 shipowners, masters, mates and seamen from Liverpool later petitioned for the repeal of the Act, complaining that the new legislation bore 'very hardly on old masters and mates, who have been for 20 or 25 years in the service ... and are now liable to be examined in matters relating to their profession by persons they remember coming to sea as boys'.⁴ On the north-east coast objections were principally directed against shipping offices, and there was a prolonged strike. The commander

1. S. 78 of the Act.

2. PRO BT/1 477 1367/1850. The official at the Board of Trade dealing with the file wrote in the margin: 'Most certainly not. The clause is harsh at present'.

3. PRO BT/1 477 643/1850. They had their way over the last item. S.63 of the Mercantile Marine Act gave seamen 'Nine Superficial Feet' of living space.

4. This petition quoted by Lord Stanley in his speech to the House of Lords on 5 May 1851. Hansard 3 116 501-510. A good explanatory account of the episode may be found in The Annual Register for 1851, chapter six.

of a warship sent to Sunderland in support of the civil power reported that 'the seamen here, though quiet, seem determined to hold out ... to resist the new Bill',¹ while on 26 March 1851 the inhabitants of Sheffield sent a petition to Whitehall protesting at the 'harsh and tyrannical provisions of the Act' whereby 'thousands of proverbially honest British sailors, with their innocent wives and children, are bordering on a state of starvation'.² The opposition to the Mercantile Marine Act faded gradually, and in the case of the ship-owners disappeared completely in 1852 when Disraeli relaxed or abolished light dues and passing tolls.³ Ships' officers who were serving as such when the Act became law were entitled to Certificates of Service,⁴ and although the owners and workforce grumbled away for many years to come,⁵ the 1850 provisions were consolidated

1. PRO BT/1 483 615/51.

2. PRO BT/1 483 764/51.

3. See Hansard 3 223 838-847. Benjamin Disraeli, (1804-81), the future Prime Minister, was Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Derby administration at the time. Light dues and passing dues were a form of tonnage tax levied on vessels passing a certain point, and the money was used to build or maintain harbours, lighthouses and ports of refuge.

4. By s.27. They were, however, generally considered inferior to Certificates of Competency obtained by examination.

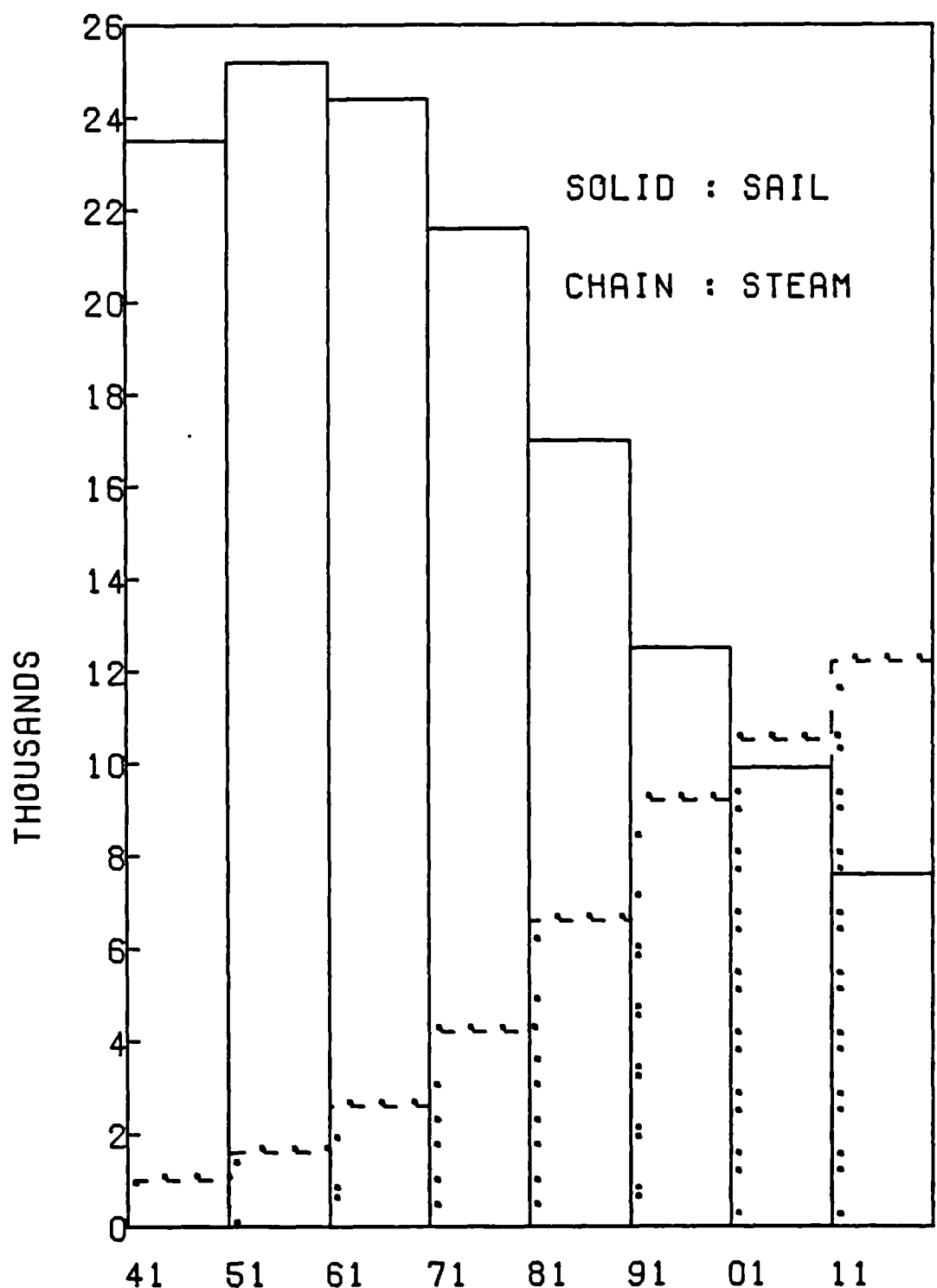
5. A petition of the 'merchants, shipowners, master mariners, mates, engineers and others' of the port of Southampton dated 13 May 1857, was sent to the Board of Trade in that year and called for an end to certification, and other reforms. It was suggested in the petition that these matters were best handled by local interests, but the official dealing with it wrote tartly that the idea that 'laws affecting Trade should be dealt with exceptionally or placed in the hands of a little Parliament of Traders is simply absurd'.
PRO BT/1 543 910/57.

in 1854 and gained a grudging acceptance.

In this period, significant change has been observed, although it must be said that the pace of change was slow, the direction uncertain and that a paternalistic approach was generally adopted. The deck-load legislation of 1839/40 and the staged certification of ships' officers may be categorised as progressive, while even the 1844 Act with its generally regressive tone had at least one good feature.¹ The demise of the Merchant Seamen's Fund left a welfare vacuum, while the 1850 Act, coming as it did on the heels of the repeal of the Navigation Acts, is a splendid example of governmental ambivalence - of an administration waving the free trade banner with one hand and passing parental legislation with the other. R.H. Thornton believed that the new wine of laissez-faire could hardly be poured into old bottles,² but insofar as the seaman's contract with his employer was concerned this was precisely what happened. Trade restrictions were ripped away to expose Britain to the cold blasts of competition, but the workforce was subjected to enhanced penalties for desertion although leaving his ship was the only way by which a sailor could maximise income and take advantage of the wage disparity in ports abroad. A government attempt to protect seamen from exploitation by crimps was

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1. S.57 laid down the first complaints procedure. Where three or more members of a crew complained of bad food or water to a Consul or Collector of Customs, the latter could order a survey.
 2. Thornton, British Shipping 45.

MEAN NUMBERS OF SHIP TYPES REGISTERED
BETWEEN 1841-50 AND 1911-20



(SOURCE) BOARD OF TRADE RETURNS OF SHIPPING
CASUALTIES PRESENTED IN DECENNIAL TERMS.
SEE APPENDIX THIRTEEN (A).

ineffective,¹ the interests of the Admiralty received undue attention from the governing class, while self-help was seen as panacea for social ills. The new Local Marine Boards were resented because they replaced older, and less formal, institutions where owners, master and men had been able to iron out local difficulties face to face.² Most of important of all, slow progress towards reform was a function of Britain's continuing reliance on a sailing merchant fleet - for a glance at Figure Two will show that sail was dominant for most of the nineteenth-century.³ Improvement in the sailors' lot, enlightened legislative and administrative measures and technological advance go very much hand in hand in the latter years of that century.

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1. The 1845 'Act for the Protection of Seamen entering on board merchant ships' (8 & 9 Vic c 116) had been intended as an anti-crimping measure, but the penalties were far too slight to have any impact.
 2. See F.W. Beechey 'A letter to the Master Mariners and Seamen in the ports of Shields and Sunderland on the subject of the Mercantile Marine Act' bound into the volume of The Nautical Magazine for 1851.
 3. See also Appendix Thirteen (A) which shows that in terms of numbers the steamship did not overtake the sailing vessel until the first decade of the twentieth-century. The break-through in tonnage terms was in 1883 - see Appendix One (ii). In 1842 only one ship in twenty-seven was a steamer - Shipping Returns, BPP 1843 (207) LII 393-408.

CHAPTER FOUR

MID-VICTORIAN SIMPLICITY

The years between the opening of the Great Exhibition and the laying of the first Atlantic telegraph cable are a period when the 'simple Victorian passion for gadgetry',¹ seized Britain's governing class, and so far as the country's merchant seamen were concerned the principal manifestation of this passion was the passing of the enormously comprehensive Merchant Shipping Act of 1854.² It was a mammoth enactment occupying a fifth of the statute book for the year, and was in eleven parts, of which part three relating to seamen is most relevant to this study. The equally massive Act of forty years later³ was based largely on the 1854 measure, which attempted to codify and rationalize all shipping legislation with the exception of Acts relating to Customs duties, harbours and emigrant ships. Quite simply, the mid-Victorians convinced themselves that shipping law was in a mess, and that there was an overwhelming necessity to cut through a thicket of close-growing legislation by means of a single sharp and shining instrument of their own forging for, as a back-bencher had proclaimed in 1850,

1. MacDonagh, A Pattern of Government Growth 1800-60 247.

2. 17 & 18 Vic c 104.

3. The Merchant Shipping Act of 1894 (57 & 58 Vic c 60) appeared as a booklet of 324 pages.

they were tired of a 'mode of legislation by patches'.¹ A claim is sometimes made that codification became necessary because of the bulk of the amending legislation required in relation to the Mercantile Marine Act of 1850,² but it seems more likely on the evidence that Parliament wanted, in W.L. Burn's vivid (1964) phrase, 'to create ... a dramatic dénouement'. Only later, of course, was it discovered that they 'had done nothing of the sort or had only created a second abuse to replace the first'.³

Size and comprehensiveness were two characteristics of the 1854 Act: the third was the remarkably low level of debate that accompanied its passage. Labouchère congratulated the House of Commons on the 'absence of party spirit',⁴ and while the Economist complained that the measure was 'disgraceful to the legislature',⁵ it did not meet with the fierce opposition

1. Hansard 3 112 1070.

2. For example, R.G. Newey's thesis Government intervention in the British merchant service in the nineteenth century 37-38, (Exeter MA, 1970), takes the line that the Mercantile Marine Amendment, Steam Navigation and Seamen's Fund Winding-Up Acts of 1851 had so muddled the waters that codification became necessary. A detailed examination shows, however, that only the Mercantile Marine Amendment Act (14 & 15 Vic c 96) is linked directly to the 1850 Act: the others are in a different line of descent, and although the Steam Navigation Act was repealed in 1854 its principal provisions as to boats, lights and surveys derive from the earlier Acts of 1846 and 1848. (9 & 10 Vic c 100 and 11 and 12 Vic c 81).

3. W.L. Burn, The Age of Equipoise (1964) 50.

4. Hansard 3 130 246.

5. Economist No. 555, 15 April 1854, 395.

that had faced the 1850 Bill. Two reasons may be advanced for this state of affairs. The creed of free trade was now more generally acceptable, and many of the deep-seated fears of shipowners had been soothed away by a reassuring document put out by Thomas Henry Farrer, the Assistant Secretary at the Board of Trade.¹ Farrer and a barrister called Henry Thring had collaborated to produce an explanatory pamphlet entitled 'Memorandum on the Merchant Shipping Law Consolidation Bill',² and in it called attention to areas where the authority of owners was not eroded. For example, Farrer and Thring emphasised that ss.116-124 enabled the Board of Trade to remove unsuitable officials, while s.221 which outlined the seaman's right to complain was itself modified by s.232 which said that the complainant could only go ashore to make such a complaint if doing so was consistent with his duty to the ship. The pamphlet laid stress on the absence in the Bill of any manning scales - the phrase used being that 'the proper number of a crew is not considered a subject for compulsory legislation'.³ Farrer and Thring also gave an explanation

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1. Thomas Henry Farrer was a barrister who served at the Board of Trade for almost forty years. Later raised to the peerage, he was a life-long advocate of laissez-faire and put his views plainly in a book entitled The State in its Relation to Trade. According to his obituary in The Times of 18 March 1890, he was 'the last of the Cobdenites'.
 2. A copy may be found at BPP 1854 LXIX 1. This document is referred to hereafter as Farrer and Thring 1854.
 3. Farrer and Thring 1854 22.

of the new legal situation whereby wages supposedly stopped with shipwreck. Prior to 1854 the situation had been confused, with owners claiming that as the voyage had not been completed no liability to pay wages existed,¹ while seamen had tended to refuse duty when shipwreck seemed imminent unless extra inducements were offered.² S.183 appeared to say categorically that wages stopped with shipwreck, but the memorandum called attention to the proviso that the seaman claiming wages up to the moment of shipwreck must have 'exerted himself to the utmost',³ and indicated that a lack of zeal would sanction the withholding of a sailor's pay. This escape clause was to be a continuing source of friction, and the matter was not wholly settled until the First World War when, under pressure from Welsh seamen, the Board of Trade decreed that shipwrecked merchant seamen should have either a months' pay or their wages until the date of their return to the United Kingdom, whichever was the greater.⁴

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1. This attitude was an extension of the principle drawn from the Laws of Oléron that 'freight is the mother of wages', and its legal basis was the case of Cutter v. Powell, (6 T.Rep. K.B. 320), dating from 1795. A man who signed-on as a mate for the voyage from Jamaica to Liverpool died a few days before reaching port, and the owners refused to pay his wages as the contract was not fulfilled. His executrix sued, but the Court decided that nothing was payable for part service.
 2. As in the Jane and Margaret case detailed in RSCCL 1825, Minutes of Evidence 92-98.
 3. Farrer and Thring 1854 24.
 4. See Chapter Seven.

With the fears of the shipowners allayed, the 1854 Bill passed the Commons at a single sitting.¹ Labouchère, now out of office, had worked with Joseph Henley² on consolidating the existing legislation, with Edward Cardwell as President of the Board of Trade supervising both of them.³ These two arch-conservatives and a champion of free trade found themselves in almost complete agreement,⁴ and substantial penalties were brought in for those type of offences that restrained trade. S.239 made it a misdemeanour (with a maximum term of two years' imprisonment) to endanger a vessel, or life, by drunkenness, neglect of duty or acts of sabotage. The Westmoreland case of 1841 had given an excellent definition of desertion for legal purposes, and the 1850 penalty of twelve weeks' imprisonment was retained.⁵ Both factions in the Whig-

1. Hansard 3 133 571-585.

2. Joseph Warner Henley, (1793-1884), was MP for Oxfordshire from 1841-78. He was briefly President of the Board of Trade in 1852, and again in 1858-59. An Oxfordshire country gentleman whose father had been a shipowner and coal merchant, Henley was an arch-conservative.

3. Edward Cardwell, (1813-86), was MP for Oxford in 1854. He had been unseated as Liverpool's MP in 1852 because of his free trade stance and his support for the repeal of the Navigation Laws.

4. Labouchère was slightly less enthusiastic about the 1854 legislation than either Henley or Cardwell, and at this time was more interested in the Coasting Trade Bill. He told the House that 'the most important of these two measures was undoubtedly that one which proposes to admit foreign ships to the coasting trade of this country'. Hansard 3 130 246.

5. In the Westmoreland case, Dr. Lushington said that to amount to desertion 'there must be a complete abandonment of duty without justification on the part of mariners; and such abandonment must, moreover, be by quitting the ship' - 1 W & Rob 216. S.243 of the 1854 Act gives a penalty of twelve weeks' imprisonment for desertion.

Peelite coalition seemed content with the comprehensiveness of the 1854 Act, and the only significant recommendation of the 1836 Report of the Select Committee on Shipwrecks remaining unimplemented was that relating to Seamen's Savings Banks. First suggested by a Mr. Symons of the Thames Police Office in 1821,¹ mentioned in the Annual Report of the Well Street Home in 1830, recommended by the 1836 Select Committee and urged by the Emigration Agent at Liverpool in 1850,² the concept was put to the House by W.S. Lindsay on 18 May 1854. Lindsay was told that the government intended to launch a comprehensive Savings Bank Bill that would embrace a Seamen's Savings Bank, but in the event progress was slow and his efforts led to a separate Seamen's Savings Bank Act in 1856.³ Parallel agitation by Lindsay led also to the establishment of the Seamen's Money Order scheme in 1855.⁴ These measures were not initially important in terms of sums saved,⁵ but in the long run proved to be valuable weapons in the battle against crimping.

The role of the Board of Trade during the 1850s

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1. MBSHS (1). Entry dated 6 July 1821.
 2. NMM SAH/60/1 and PRO BT/1 476 302/1850.
 3. Hansard 3 133 571-585. The reference for the Seamen's Savings Bank Act is 19 & 20 Vic c 41.
 4. By s.2 of the Merchant Shipping Amendment Act, 1855. 18 & 19 Vic c 91.
 5. In 1864 Seamen's Savings Bank deposits amounted to less than 3/8d a head, while as late as 1889 deposits were under £1 a head. See Seamen's Savings Bank, BPP 1865 (272) L 333 and BPP 1890 (356) LXVI 126.

and early 1860s may be described as one of cautious and hesitant involvement in the shipping industry despite D.L. Keir's claim that it was an example of the 'significant ... expansion of administrative services' in the period.¹ Indeed, in looking at the work of the Board in the second half of the nineteenth-century as a whole it appears that the (1969) view of Henry Parris that institutions respond to changes in society is more correct.² In the years from 1851 to 1866 it may be said that its attitude to the workforce was conditioned by the anti-interventionist stance of two civil servants who were themselves much influenced by the prevalent view of the governing class that labour was a commodity, and that the success of free trade depended on a limitless, cheap supply of that commodity. Thomas Henry Farrer, co-author of the 'Memorandum on the Merchant Shipping Law Consolidation Bill' that had proved so effective in disarming the shipowners in 1854, was one of these civil servants: Thomas Gray the other. Gray had joined the Board of Trade as a boy clerk in 1851, and in the 1860s was head of the Marine Department under Farrer, the Board's Assistant Secretary. Gray was a 'new' civil servant - a product of the reforms deriving from the publication of the Northcote-Trevelyan

1. D.L. Keir, Constitutional History of Modern Britain, 1485-1915 (1953 edition) 419-420.

2. Henry Parris, Constitutional Bureaucracy (1969) 282.

Report of 1854¹ - and, as the doctrine of non-involvement governing the public life of present-day civil servants did not obtain in the 1860s, Gray made no attempt to hide his beliefs. On 21 February 1866 he addressed the Society of Arts,² taking as his principal theme the advice of the 1860 Select Committee on Merchant Shipping to the effect that undue interference with the industry should be avoided. He attacked the Steam Navigation Acts of 1846, 1848 and 1851, the Merchant Shipping Act of 1854 and the Chain Cables and Anchors Act of 1864 as over-meticulous, and suggested the abolition of all safety legislation relating to boats, safety valves and anchor chains.³ The United Service Gazette of 24 February 1866 thought his criticisms destructive rather than constructive, while the Saturday Review of 10 March 1866 described Gray as a self-appointed martyr to laissez-faire theory. This latter contemporary view of

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1. The Report on the Organization of the Permanent Civil Service actually came out in November 1853, but as E.N. Gladden points out in his Civil Services of the United Kingdom, 1855 - 1970 (1967) 19 it is usually described as an 1854 publication.
 2. The title of his paper was 'On Modern Legislation in regard to the Construction and Equipment of Steam Ships'.
 3. The Engineer of 23 February 1866 approved his thesis, and said that 'government interference may become vicious if it attempts to attain an end by official inspection and supervision instead of appealing to the self-interest of the trader'. The Shipping and Mercantile Gazette of 22 February 1866 has the full text of Gray's paper, which contains his view of safety legislation in the phrase 'it had not been shown that government supervision ever did save life, or that it ever will do so'.

Gray seems accurate, and in looking at the work of the Board of Trade between 1851 and 1866 a case may be made out that an over-zealous adherence to the laissez-faire ideal led to an almost total failure to improve the lot of merchant seamen. As will be shown, the Board failed to control crimping, check desertion or even maintain health standards, while Parliament actually repealed the only safety measure on the statute book.

Legislation against crimping in 1835 and 1845¹ had been of limited effect because the penalties were extremely small,² and the 1854 Act did not increase them. A £20 fine for supplying seamen without a licence was a ludicrously low penalty when the crimp was making a double profit on each seamen - first by cashing a seaman's advance note at a discount of up to 50%,³ and second by delivering drugged or drunken seamen to a ship for 'head money'. The bullies who worked for crimps were also subject to extremely light penalties on conviction. They were forbidden by ss. 237-238 of the 1854 Act to go aboard a ship without permission, or solicit a seaman to lodge ashore, but as the maximum penalty was a mere £5 fine it was no real deterrent. There are many contemporary accounts detailing the behaviour of crimps' runners who swarmed aboard docking ships to carry off the crew with promises of good times

1. 5 & 6 Will 4 c 19, s.10 and 8 & 9 Vic c 116, s.1.

2. Maximum fines of £10 and £20 respectively.

3. Labouchère's speech in the House on 11 February 1850. Hansard 3 108 676.

or steady jobs ashore,¹ and masters had to pay for new hands, who might be green landsmen, or even dead bodies soaked in rum to simulate a drunken sailor. Liverpool crimps always tried to get their victims to sign wills so that they could claim the dead man's wages if he died at sea,² while American ships arrived with one kidnapped crew and departed with another obtained in the same way. The process was described by James Smith, chairman of the Liverpool Shipowners Association, in his evidence to the 1860 Select Committee:

We have on many occasions in Liverpool heard of the captains of American ships being brought up on a summons before the magistrates by men who have been kidnapped on the other side of the water. They have been got by these crimps into a boat and put on board a ship; men who have never had a foot on board a ship before; and then comes into use what I think are called brass knuckles. In Liverpool he (the American captain) does not ship seamen through the shipping office ... he gets his men through a set of crimp's men who make a business of it ... there is a continual change of men, and it gives employment to a large number of crimps ...'³

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1. For example, in the 1860s at Cardiff twenty or thirty runners would board an incoming vessel and take the men off. Evidence of the Superintendent of Missions to Seamen based at Portishead before the Select Committee on the Merchant Shipping Bill. Report from the Select Committee on the Merchant Shipping Bill, BPP 1878 (205) XVI QQ.3541-3551. Referred to hereafter as RSCMSB 1878.
 2. Evidence of Henry Richard Williams, accountant at the Board of Trade, to the 1859 Commission of Enquiry into Manning the Navy. RCMN 1859 Q.6111.
 3. RSCMS 1860 QQ.2522-2523.

Crimping was big business at home and abroad. At Quebec where new ships were built for the European market, crimps were engaged by the builders to find passage crews for the delivery voyage.¹ At Callao an artificial shortage of seamen was maintained by crimps who held back the supply of men in the interests of sustaining demand,² while the Dublin Ballast Board wrote to the Board of Trade in 1863 indicating that crimps had found a way round the 1850 Act and describing what happened after men had signed-on at a shipping office.

a months' wages are then advanced to each man to enable him to get his outfit, but is generally spent on profligacy and debauchery, and parties (termed pimps)³ are always on the watch to pick up and secrete any good sailor ... and in lieu they send down to the pier ... the worst description of person they can pick up, and the vessel that is all ready to sail ... must either take these 'substitutes', as they are termed, or go to sea half-manned. Some captains ... prefer to arrange with the parties who have secreted the men before referred to, and to give a certain sum per head for every man they supply.⁴

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1. The techniques employed by the Quebec crimps ranged from the subtle legal manoeuvres of John Wilson, an attorney, to the more traditional forceful methods of the notorious James Ward. See PRO BT/1 479 2425/1850, Frederick W. Wallace, Wooden Ships and Iron Men (1973 edition) 102, and The Shipping and Mercantile Gazette of 24 September 1852.
 2. PRO MT/9 31 M.443/1867.
 3. The writer of the letter has evidently confused the protectors of prostitutes with the suppliers of sea labour - although in some cases they were one and the same.
 4. Shipping of Crews (Liverpool), BPP 1863 (464) LXIII 876.

The general tendency among masters was to recruit selectively when seamen were plentiful, go to the shipping office when times were normal and resort to crimps when demand exceeded supply.¹ The 1854 Act had associated shortcomings in relation to the payment of seamen, and these contributed to the continued prosperity of the crimping interest. The pay-off period in foreign-going ships was, by s. 187 of the 1854 Act, within three days of cargo delivery or five days of discharge, and this had the effect of keeping seamen in the dock area for some time before being paid in full. The Merchant Shipping Amendment Act of 1862² actually had the effect of increasing the hold of crimps over British seamen abroad because s.22 said that only those seamen who could be shown as having not misconducted themselves or jumped ship could be sent home as distressed British seamen, and others with a flawed record were compelled to resort to crimps to get a berth. Two years earlier, T.H. Farrer had testified that although crimping was 'full of evil' he could see no remedy because he would not interfere with a contract between master and man.³ He took a similar attitude in 1866 when an enquiry was initiated into crimping at Cardiff following the publication of an

1. See letter to the Board of Trade from the Chairman of the Local Marine Board at Liverpool of 11 June 1863 on BPP 1863 LXIII 879.

2. 25 & 26 Vic c 63.

3. RSCMS 1860 QQ.5805-5823.

article in the Cardiff Times on 2 March. This article was a development of allegations by the city's mayor that the 'lowest scum of the town made a living by practising on the credulity of sailors' and that 'it was practically impossible to obtain a conviction for crimping'. A Board of Trade inspector reported on 8 May 1866¹ and recommended the abolition of advance notes and the licensing of boarding houses: Farrer took the view that although advance notes led to crimping they were issued by shipowners, and therefore the remedy lay with the shipowners. In the following year he minuted a file dealing with crimping abroad to the effect that 'a perfect remedy seems almost hopeless'.² It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Farrer was blinkered by his over-meticulous adherence to legal forms, his view of the sacred nature of contract and his strongly-held belief in laissez-faire, for it will be shown in the next chapter that the crimping problem was tackled successfully through the initiative of a number of junior officials who were both closer to the problem and unencumbered by a rigid attitude concerning the relationship of master and man.

The signing-on of men at shipping offices had been intended as a device to cut crimps out of the recruiting process, but the system of advance notes - which the 1854 Act did nothing to regulate - ensured

1. PRO MT/9 26 M.1030/1866.

2. PRO MT/9 31 M.443/1867.

that a seaman often had to go to crimps or their agents to get them cashed.¹ As a consequence, masters had to go to crimps for a crew, and what was supplied tended to be the useless 'substitutes' or noisy and refractory drunkards. In 1863 Captain John Herron of the Agamemnon complained bitterly to the Local Marine Board at Liverpool that this practice endangered ships because their masters had insufficient capable crew to work the vessel in confined waters. 'The men', he wrote,

are all strangers to the captain; most frequently go aboard in a state of intoxication; and are often so diseased as to render them not only useless in the navigation of the ship, but so reckless and refractory that they will neither work themselves nor allow others to do so.²

The advance note also operated as an incentive to desertion abroad. A seaman bound away on a relatively short voyage to North America who had received (and spent) his advance had little incentive to serve out his time in his present ship when high wages could be earned by returning to the United Kingdom in another. He had, as the saying went, 'worked off the dead horse'³ and had nothing to lose by deserting. T.H. Farrer appreciated this point well enough, but his suggestion to the 1860 Select Committee that if all engagements were for a single voyage between ports desertion would cease

1. 'These notes are generally cashed by the boarding-house keeper or some clothier'. Letter to the Board of Trade from a Liverpool official on BPP 1863 LXIII 878-879.
2. BPP 1863 LXIII 874.
3. That is, repaid the sum advanced by his labour.

to be a problem was not adopted.¹ It was the perfect laissez-faire solution,² but the shipowners who dominated the 1860 enquiry declined to take the matter further.

The relationship between sailors and crimps was a close one for three reasons. Most crimps were former seamen who had a common vocabulary and shared experience, while the nature of the seaman's trade had cut his links with ordinary society. Seamen were almost a different species, and Geoffrey Rawson's (1958) comment was:

In those days of long slow voyages, when the seamen returned after a long absence to their native habitat, they found themselves in a strange world and in a strange society. They were unaccustomed to terra firma. They walked with rolling gait on the firm ground, they uttered a strange argot, they were simpletons out of their element, and easy prey.³

Consequently, faced with this hostile shore environment, there was a tendency for sailors to put themselves voluntarily in the hands of crimps from whom some sort of temporary welcome was assured - a process described in the traditional shanty 'Get up Jack, John sit down'.

1. RSCMS 1860 Q.5840

2. Joseph Henley proposed an alternative solution that desertion be reduced to an offence of absence without leave punishable by a fine in 1850 - Hansard 3 112 1444-1452 - and the suggestion was considered by the Pearson Committee in 1967, being finally embodied in the 1970 Merchant Shipping Act. See also F.J.J. Cadwalladers' article 'Discipline in British Merchant Ships' Journal of Maritime Law and Commerce II (1970-71) 147-164.

3. Geoffrey Rawson, Sea Prelude (1958) 99.

When Jack's ashore he beats his way to
 some boarding house;
 He's welcomed in with rum and gin, likewise
 with port and scouse.
 He'll spend and spend and never offend till
 he lies drunk on ground:
 For when his money is gone, t'is the same
 old song;
 Get up Jack, John sit down.

Third, there was the function of the crimp as an employment and loan agent for those classes of men who would have difficulty in finding work in the ordinary way - the old seamen, the diseased, the mentally ill and the greenhorns. For this type of labour 'credit was an absolute necessity',¹ as the market for their services was both marginal and volatile and the crimp might have to maintain his lodgers for some time before a berth could be found. The crimping industry survived as long as it did for four main reasons. Voyages were long, and seamen became detached from the mainstream of shore life. The advance note compelled them to resort to crimps, while wage disparity abroad encouraged desertion. The state was unwilling, for ideological reasons, to control the supply of labour or monitor arrangements for pay-off and discharge. With the passage of time, the rise of the steam vessel was to act on the first factor and unionisation on the third. Only a retreat from laissez-faire could effect changes in the second and fourth areas.

The failure of the Board of Trade to safeguard

1. J.R. Bruijn, 'Seamen in Dutch Ports: c. 1700 - c. 1914' The Mariner's Mirror 65, No. 4, November 1979, 331.

the health of merchant seamen, or curb the rising death rate in this period, may serve as an indictment of the prevalent laissez-faire attitude of legislators and administrators. The first statistical point that must be made is that the annual rate of fatal industrial injury and death by disease in the shipping industry rose from about 1½% in 1852 to over 2½% in 1868. Further, in the same period, some 3,360 seamen died, on average, annually and between 75% and 90% of these deaths were due to drowning or disease.¹ Very few deaths were accidental in the proper sense of the word - the majority being preventable by legislative measures or medical advance. The problem of unseaworthy ships and the toll of life due to wrecks will be dealt with later, and the emphasis here put on the additional risks faced by a class of young workers in a strenuous occupation with considerable climatic variations.²

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1. See Appendices Three and Eight (A) and (B).
 2. Statistics presented to the Select Committee on the Merchant Seaman's Fund in 1844 show that 95% of all men before the mast were under 35 years of age, RSCMSF 1844 Q.306. As late as 1858, six seamen were employed in sailing vessels for every one in steamers - see the Annual Statement of Trade and Navigation for 1858, BPP 1859 (2562-Sess.2) XXCIII 440-441. A twentieth-century analysis of seamen's patterns of sickness reproduced as Appendix Nine (A) shows that in Mediterranean climates the injury rate more than doubles, while in the tropics the skin disease statistics more than treble. Seamen themselves refer to their work as 'all sweating and freezing', and Thomas Oliver describes it thus. 'His work is intermittent, consequently his intervals of rest, broken by sudden and severe exertions, throw undue and violent strain on the circulatory and respiratory organs'. Thomas Oliver, Dangerous Trades (1902) 103.

The 1835 Act suffered from a good deal of loose drafting, and nowhere is this deficiency more apparent than in the bland and unqualified statement that a 'sufficient' quantity of medicines should be carried in British merchant vessels.¹ The 1844 Act went a little further in saying that this supply of medicines should be in accordance with future Admiralty directions, and it also introduced a minimum scale of anti-scorbutics to be served out after ten days on salted provisions.² The 1854 Act repeated the foregoing word for word, and made no addition or amendment. In the 1850s the principal fatal sea diseases were typhus (often recorded as 'intermittent fever' or 'calenture(s)',³ in official papers), yellow fever and cholera. No certain cure was available for yellow fever, and the kind of preventive medicine which might have checked the incidence of typhus and cholera was in its infancy. Apart from the killing diseases, the principal medical preoccupation was with scurvy and syphilis, and it is paradoxical that while considerable resources were mobilized to deal with the former - for which the cure had long been known - virtually nothing was done about the latter where a small research investment might have

1. 5 & 6 Will 4 c 19, s.18.

2. 8 Vic c 112, s.18. The recommended amounts were half an ounce of lime or lemon juice a day with sugar and half a pint of vinegar a week.

3. From the Spanish 'calentura' meaning fever.

produced spectacular returns.¹ In assessing the scale of both syphilis and scurvy the official statistics are of little help. A typical year might show eighteen deaths from venereal infections and thirty from scurvy, but many more are either recorded euphemistically under 'debility', 'insanity' or 'brain fever', or took place ashore and are not recorded in the correct context.² The mid-Victorians published no data on the incidence of venereal infection, but information from an earlier and a later source gives an indication of the scale of the problem.

It seems likely on the evidence that some 11% of British merchant seamen contracted a form of venereal disease at some time during their service,³ and what contemporary confirmation exists comes as addenda to other medical information. For example, the records of the Seamen's Hospital Society often include a note of venereal complications among scurvy victims. There were three cases of scurvy in the Prince Oscar in 1865 and Oland Knudson, the blacksmith, 'had the venereal'.

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1. R.S. Allison in his Sea Diseases (1943) makes the point several times that nineteenth-century British seamen were treated for syphilis with mercury ointment - a technique used in medieval times.
 2. The figures in Appendix Eight, for example, refer to shipboard deaths: deaths from disease contracted at sea or abroad are not included if they took place following discharge.
 3. James Lind in An Essay of the Most Effectual Means of Preserving the Health of Seamen in the Royal Navy (1774) records that 11.3% of hospitalized seamen had a venereal disease, while the Report of the House Governor of the Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital for 1953 gives a remarkably similar figure of 11.29%.

When three men from the Marlborough were admitted to the hospital it was recorded that 'Jacob Creeby who joined the ship in Calcutta had bubo of venereal origin'. There were two cases of scurvy in the Oliver Cromwell in 1866 and one was Thomas Bowlam who was suffering from delirium tremens, scurvy and a venereal infection.¹ It was certainly the popular view of the time that seamen were prime culprits in transmitting venereal disease. There was, for example, the widely-held medical and historical belief that syphilis had been brought to Europe by Columbus' sailors in 1493,² while Lowestoft fishermen still use a net-hauling chant that indicts the merchant seaman as a disease-carrier to be avoided.

Our sturdy salts,
Have sorry faults,
Beneath their tarry breeches.
They bring disease,
From overseas,
The mucky sons-of-bitches!

Whatever view is taken of the conduct of seamen in a period when long voyages and limited transport facilities meant lengthy absences from home, it must be said that the Board of Trade took no steps to assume its responsibilities in respect of medical supplies inherited from the Admiralty until March 1865, when the medical provisions of s. 224 of the 1854 Act were finally implemented.³

1. Correspondence on Scurvy, BPP 1867 (126) LXIV, 127, 133, 142 and 156.

2. This theory is now somewhat discredited. Calvin Wells in his Bones, Bodies and Disease (1964) 100-105 believes that syphilis existed in Europe and Africa before 1493, but the absence of the disease in Egyptian mummies remains puzzling.

3. The same section also deals with anti-scorbutics such as limejuice and vinegar.

The first list of medical stores reveals what little thought went into its composition.¹ It details little more than first-aid provision, with castor oil, prepared chalk, an enema and a catheter on the list. Insofar as venereal disease was concerned, there was no provision other than the catheter, and a seriously-infected man or boy would soon lose his efficiency, as Conrad Greenhow, the Mercantile Marine Office superintendent at North Shields, testified when giving evidence to the 1860 Select Committee on Merchant Shipping.

There was one boy who was sent to me from Wales three years ago; as fine a boy as I ever saw in my life; he went on a voyage and came home a fine lad. His master spoke well of him, and he received between £14 and £15. I lost sight of him, he would not allow me to send him to a good lodging, and he came back a fortnight afterwards destroyed for ever. The boy was diseased; he had been drinking, and into all manner of dissipation, having been introduced into it by the crimps.²

A case can be made out that the Board of Trade did its best in the light of the existing state of medical knowledge respecting syphilis and gonorrhoea, but scurvy is in quite a different category because its causes and cure were well documented in the 1850s and 1860s. It had been eliminated in the Royal Navy around 1795, and was virtually unknown in ships making voyages

1. A copy is on PRO MT/9 32 M.765/1867.

2. RSCMS 1860 Q.4238.

of less than 100 days. The 1844 allowance of lime or lemon juice¹ was sufficient to keep a fit man from scurvy if unadulterated and supplied regularly, but when the 1851 Act² permitted the substitution of citric acid crystals and declared that the supply of antiscorbutics was not compulsory in ships trading in the North Atlantic there was an increase in the incidence of the disease. This increase was added to by the longer voyages occasioned by the Crimean War, the expansion of the Far Eastern, Australian, West Coast and South American trades where voyages of over 150 days were not uncommon, and a section of the 1854 Act which said that antiscorbutics need not be supplied to the crew of vessels trading in the Atlantic, to ports in Europe or the Mediterranean.³ The number of scurvy patients admitted annually by the Seamen's Hospital Society doubled between 1853 and 1854, and went up a further 28% in 1855.⁴ The following year was the worst on record with some 1.3% of the workforce dying of disease.⁵

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1. Lime juice, from West Indian limes, is virtually useless as an antiscorbutic, but by long usage the name is given to Sicilian lemon juice, which is most effective. Orange juice is equally effective, but more difficult to store for long periods.
 2. 14 & 15 Vic c 96, ss. 18 and 19.
 3. S.224.
 4. See Appendix Nine (B).
 5. See Appendices Three and Eight (A). Some 2¼% of the workforce died from all causes in 1856, so that over half of the deaths were attributable to disease.

Clearly, some reinforcement of the existing law was needed, and the ammunition for reform was supplied by Harry Leach, the forthright and outspoken Resident Medical Officer in Dreadnought.

Leach was able to ascertain that scurvy, which is a vitamin deficiency disease arising from lack of fresh vegetable food, impure water, poor ventilation in living quarters, dirt, cold and damp, was breaking out in ships where either the lime or lemon juice was bad from long keeping and the crew refused to drink it, or where salt beef or pork was so long in the cask that it contained very little nourishment,¹ or where the water was tainted. As a result of the 1851 legislation permitting chemical substitutes, much so-called lime juice was weak tartaric or citric acid with a lemon flavouring, and the general public - already beginning to murmur about the adulteration of foodstuffs sold ashore - began to follow the debate.² Harry Leach came up with the simplest possible solutions; an inspection of anti-scorbutics for purity before shipping them and the addition of spirit to lime or lemon juice to make it more palatable. He was wise enough to say that while

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1. In some cases the salt beef was so hard it had the appearance of mahogany, and seamen carved it into ornaments. Henry Moffat saw a Swedish sailor carve a piece of salt beef so as to make a frame for the ship's clock in the 1860s. See Conrad Dixon 'The Hard Life and Times of Henry Moffat, Seaman' in The Mariner's Mirror Vol. 59, No. 2 (1973) 200.
 2. It began with a letter to The Times signed 'W.F.' and printed on 28 August 1863.

the addition of 10% alcohol by volume in the form of rum or brandy would preserve lime juice, an addition of 15% would ensure that the seamen always drank it.¹ Kemball Cook, Secretary of the Seamen's Hospital Society, urged the Board of Trade from early 1864 onwards to have lime juice put into a number of small containers rather than one large cask so that deterioration might be partial rather than total, and in December of that year the Board of Trade issued a notice to Local Marine Boards suggesting that they inspect lime juice and investigate outbreaks of scurvy.

The Local Marine Boards parried this thrust from central government in various ways. The London Board replied that as scurvy was principally caused by a lack of fresh vegetables it proposed to put treatises on the subject in medicine chests, while Newcastle replied then rum and mustard was an infallible cure. Sunderland said that the real problem was that the men hated the taste of the stuff, and threw it away when the mate was not looking, while many Local Marine Boards grumbled that it was all very well asking for the inspection of lime juice, but who was going to pay the wages of the inspectors?² Public agitation increased, and when another anonymous letter to The Times said that 'a large quantity of so-called lemon juice ... contains no juice of lemon, it is manufactured in this country

1. Correspondence on Scurvy, BPP 1965 (404) L 277.

2. BPP 1965 L 277-331.

from ... acids ... to imitate the genuine article',¹ Leach wrote to the Board of Trade citing it and added, 'I have had many samples analyzed, and found them so to be made up'.² In September 1865 the Board of Trade went part way to meet the criticism, and while shying away from compulsory inspection of lime juice felt it proper to circularise shipowners to suggest that only pure juice be obtained, that 10% brandy be added as a preservative, and that the ration be increased to four tablespoons a week after the first fourteen days at sea. In 1867 Harry Leach got his way when s.4 of the Merchant Shipping Act³ decreed the addition of 15% proof spirit to lime juice. Scurvy steadily declined after 1867,⁴ but in assessing the ravages of the disease over the last twelve years the Seamen's Hospital Society had no doubt as to where to lay the blame.

The Merchant Shipping Act, as at present constituted, affords no remedy for this evil - and so our sailors go to sea, are supplied with these useless mixtures ... and on their return are hoisted into Dreadnought, or are laid up in lodging houses, helpless for the present and ruined in stamina for the future.⁵

Between 1849 and 1866 this one hospital admitted almost

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1. The Times 26 August 1864.
 2. BPP 1865 L 290.
 3. 30 & 31 Vic c 124.
 4. See Appendix Nine (B). It was down 60% in terms of Dreadnought admissions from the 1865/66 level by 1869.
 5. Annual Report of the Seamen's Hospital Society for 1866.

1,500 scurvy sufferers;¹ men in the prime of life suffering from a wholly preventable deficiency disease. The legislature had quite failed to safeguard the health of the seagoing workforce, and the executive arm of government had displayed a remarkable reluctance to interfere in a decisive manner.

Successive governments may have been indifferent to health problems, but from this period there was increasing concern about 'deterioration' in the calibre of the workforce, and it was popularly supposed that this was either due to the influx of foreign seamen after 1849 when all restrictions on their employment were removed, or because traditional skills were lost when experienced men, or new recruits, served in steamers.² The recruitment of foreign seamen certainly had the effect of keeping down wages and making sea employment generally less attractive, where choice existed, and it is undeniable that men left sail for steam when the opportunity arose, but the key to this question is the matter of physical deterioration. It seems likely on the evidence that in the mid-nineteenth-century the places of

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1. Letter from Kemball Cook, Secretary of the Seamen's Hospital Society, to the Registrar-General of Seamen dated 16 November 1866. Correspondence on Scurvy, BPP 1967 (126) LXIV 98-100.
 2. For example, the Secretary to the Trinity House at Hull told the 1860 Select Committee that 'steam vessels (are) rapidly taking the place of sailing vessels (and) the crew consists mainly of engineers and firemen and very few sailors ... are to be met with ... it is found in steam vessels boys are taught little more than to polish brass work, carry coals and do the work of a servant.' RSCMS 1860 Q.4493.

residence of the workforce were changing and that recruits were coming from the least healthy areas of the country. Appendix Ten gives the figures for pauper seamen in England and Wales in 1857, and Figure Three has the same information in graphic form. It can be seen that the London area and the north-east counties are where the majority of seamen are living when they require in-door or out-door relief, while the inland counties have no significant numbers of paupers in this category. The seaman/fisherman/agricultural labourer type of worker who was popularly believed to be the backbone of the merchant service is still well represented in Norfolk and Devon, but in 1857 the cities and industrial and mining areas are supplying the bulk of the workforce. Kent, Middlesex, Durham, Northumberland and Yorkshire have more seamen paupers than the rest of England and Wales put together, and it is in these areas that health is poor and the rate of mortality high. In 1856 the county of Durham had the highest death-rate in the United Kingdom because 'many of the governing bodies have left the towns deplorably destitute of satisfactory sanitary arrangements', while the high death-rate in cities generally was the subject of special adverse comment by a public health expert in the same year.¹ The (1978) research of Jonathan Press has shown

1. Nineteenth Annual Report of the Registrar-General, BPP 1957-58 (2431) XXIII 19, and the paper by E. Headlam Greenhow entitled 'On the Different Prevalence of certain Diseases in different Districts in England and Wales' at page 331 in the same volume.

that only 2.2% of the seagoing workforce had inland, rural origins:¹ the sample of destitute seamen given in Figure Three confirms that, at maturity, the great majority had settled in cities and industrial areas where conditions tended to be least healthy. Deterioration continued to be a matter of heated debate for the remainder of the nineteenth-century, but it was not then appreciated that the sailor had become a town-dweller between voyages² and that his health had suffered accordingly. Additionally, when statistical material became available on the calibre of potential Boer War recruits early in the next century it was seen that the alleged 'deterioration' in seamen was merely part of the poor physical condition of the working class as a whole. Poor health tends to be associated with poor feeding and impure water, and a further connection may be established by looking at the legislative provision made in this period.

The first regulation in respect of drinking water dates from 1844 when, consequent on the cholera scare of the previous year, a hasty addition to the 1844 Act gave crew members the right to ask for a survey of

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1. Jonathan Patrick Press, The Economic and Social Conditions of the Merchant Seamen of England, 1815-1845. (University of Bristol Ph.D. 1978) 21.
 2. Sarah Palmer makes the point strongly that London was 'home' to a great many seamen at this time. See her 'Seamen Ashore in Late Nineteenth-Century London: Protection from the Crimps' in Seamen in Society edited by Paul Adam - the proceedings of the International Commission of Maritime History conference held at Bucharest in August 1980.

drinking water, food or medicine.¹ This right was exercised by complaint to a Consul or a Controller of Customs, but there had to be at least three complainants in the crew. When the provision was repeated in the 1854 Act it was qualified by another section of the Act that said that if, following a survey by a Consul, shipping master, Customs officer or naval captain, the complaint was deemed frivolous the complainants could be fined up to a weeks' pay.² As a consequence, very few complaints seem to have been made in the period, and generally the matter was only aired when desertion or a refusal of duty compelled a response. Many owners supplied water from questionable sources, or took little care as to how it was stored. Henry Moffat describes the filling of the casks in the brig Premium with River Thames water at the half-ebb in this period,³ while Walter Runciman notes in the memoirs of his early life that when he served in the Harperley the water casks were either stowed on deck to face permeation by salt spray or put in the hold on top of a coal cargo.⁴ The Society for Improving the Condition of Merchant Seamen called for water to be stored in iron tanks rather than wooden

1. 8 Vic c 112, s.57.

2. 17 & 18 Vic c 104, ss.221-222.

3. Henry Moffat, From Ship's Boy to Skipper - with Variations (Paisley, 1910) 42.

4. Walter Runciman, Before the Mast - and After (1924) 49. He was the father of Walter Runciman (1870-1949), a shipowner and Liberal MP who was President of the Board of Trade in 1914-16 and in the 1930s.

casks,¹ but there was no legislative change in this period. The only executive action by the Board of Trade was the issue in 1865 of a circular condemning the supply of condensed water to seamen in steamers and reminding shipowners of their statutory obligation to provide 'a good supply of fresh water'. Under the 1854 Act the maximum fine for omitting to provide such a supply, after a survey, was £20.²

Prior to the development of refrigeration late in the nineteenth-century, the problem of shipping consumable stores had been largely solved by the provision of salted, dried and liquid foodstuffs headed-up in casks for longer keeping. There was a considerable variation in the food supplied to merchant seamen in the 1850s and 1860s, but two common factors were 'bread' - which was a type of hard-grained, flinty biscuit - and salt meat. The normal allowance of the former was a pound a day,³ and while the ration of the latter comprised about $1\frac{1}{3}$ pounds of meat on the bone before cooking, the seaman generally got about $\frac{1}{2}$ lb of stringy gristle in his pannikin liberally garnished with marbled fat. Oatmeal, rice and dried peas were commonly supplied in

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1. Report of the Committee of the Society for Improving the Condition of Merchant Seamen, PRO MT/9 M.5489/1867.
 2. S.212.
 3. Enlightened owners, such as Money, Wigram and Sons, posted diet scales in the fo'c's'le, and their 1866 scale included the phrase 'Allowance not limited: no Waste allowed' under the heading for bread. From a diet scale in the private collection of the candidate.

small quantities; there was a weekly ration of flour for making duff and of sugar for sweetening tea. In steamers and the better class of sailing ships about half a pound of tinned meat (known as 'Harriet Lane' after a notorious Liverpool prostitute who was murdered and dismembered by a client) might be doled out on Sundays with a half-ration of salt meat. Appendix Eleven has details of nine diets, including (D) and (F) relating to the 1860s. These diets are markedly inferior to even the naval provision scale of 1785 at (A), being both monotonous and grossly deficient in vitamins A, C and D. They contain no fresh food at all, and one contemporary medical opinion was that this type of feeding was a principal cause of scurvy in merchant vessels.¹ The legal position was that 'a scale of provisions' was one of the items agreed to by signatories to crew agreements,² and in theory the provision scale was subject to negotiation. In practice, seamen had little chance of bargaining: the words 'Liverpool Scale' or some other formula being stamped or written-into the agreement beforehand. In the next chapter it will be shown that although great pressure was brought upon Board of Trade officials by the medical experts to endorse a higher standard of nutrition, the former

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1. The view of Dr. Walter Dickson, a Customs employee, who allied himself with Harry Leach to improve sailors' diet. BPP 1867 LXIV 93-96.
 2. A point established by s.46 of the 1850 Act and confirmed by s.149 of the 1854 Act.

succeeded in both avoiding a statutory solution and a confrontation with the shipowners who wished to preserve the status quo.

In the field of welfare this was a barren period, and the welfare gap that existed between the winding-up of the Merchant Seamen's Fund in 1851 and the founding of the Royal Alfred Aged Merchant Seamen's Institution¹ in 1857 was virtually absolute in the national sense because charities catering directly for the needs of seamen in distress tended to be either religious in character or local in operation. The British and Foreign Sailors Society,² created in 1833 through a merger of the Port of London Society with the Bethel-Union Society, was primarily concerned with spiritual welfare and moral improvement,³ while the Keelman's Hospital on Tyneside, Trinity House at Hull and the Sailors' Children's Society, founded in 1821, had strictly local applications. The Royal Alfred was greatly restricted in the amount of relief it could give, and it may be said that for all intents and purposes there was no comprehensive provision for old,

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1. Renamed The Royal Alfred Merchant Seamen's Society in 1950 when a royal charter was granted. Originally an offshoot of the Shipwrecked Mariners Society, the patronage of Prince Alfred, second son of Queen Victoria, was an essential element of its success. See A. Stewart McMillan's The Royal Alfred Story (1967) 12-16.
 2. Now the British Sailors' Society.
 3. The provision of clubs and hostel accommodation came late in the nineteenth-century, although the organisation continues to have a strong religious element.

sick or disabled seamen between 1851 and the first decade of the twentieth-century when the Liberals laid the foundation of the welfare state. The Merchant Seamen's Fund had been paying over 7,000 pensions in 1848, and while they were generally inadequate as a sole means of livelihood, running as they did at an average rate of £6-10s a year, these pensions nevertheless represented a reasonable supplement to a family income in an age when the extended family was more common than latterly.¹ Greenwich Hospital, only available to merchant seamen who had also served in the Royal Navy, was phased out in the 1860s when over 1,000 inmates with service in merchant vessels were pensioned-off. For the great majority of sick, disabled or elderly merchant seamen the usual provision thereafter was the workhouse, or those institutions in the larger cities given the name of Asylums for the Homeless Poor. The reconstitution of the Merchant Seamen's Fund was suggested on numerous occasions, but it was never implemented.²

In the field of safety the year 1862 marked a retreat from the deckload legislation of 1839, and here the responsibility lies with Milner Gibson, who was President of the Board of Trade between July 1859

1. RRCMSF 1847-48, Appendix 4.

2. The nearest the suggestion came to implementation was in 1880 when Joseph Chamberlain promised to introduce a short Bill for the purpose, but the promise was not kept. See Hansard 3 252 955-974.

and July 1866.¹ He had permitted the repeal of the 1839 Act that prohibited winter deck-loads in the North Atlantic on the grounds that the lengthening of poops and the construction of spar-decks² had enabled timber ships to carry de-facto deckloads without contravening the Act, while the loading of timber in America rather than Canada had led to a loss of revenue by the Canadian authorities.³ During his time in office, the rise in the number of shipping casualties was a cause for public concern, and in 1866 it was reported that 'half (of the casualty list) is represented by the unseaworthy, overladen or ill-found vessels of the collier class chiefly employed in the coasting trade'.⁴ The reality was that economic forces were compelling the employment of the largely unsurveyed sailing fleet in bulk trades where the strain on hull and rigging was greatest, and while surveys to ascertain

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1. Thomas Milner Gibson (1806-1884) was MP for Ashton-under-Lyne, and a Cobdenite and free-trader. He is best remembered for his opposition to Britain's involvement in the Crimean War and for seconding Cobden's motion of censure of Palmerston's China policy in 1857.
 2. In sailing ships, a framework structure above the main deck to hold spare masts and spars.
 3. Information from T.H. Farrer and reproduced at BPP 1873 (C.853) XXXVI 809, the Preliminary Report of the Royal Commission on Unseaworthy Ships (referred to hereafter as PRRCUS 1873). The repeal of the 1839 Act was by 25 & 26 Vic c 63, s.2.
 4. Remarks to accompany the Wreck Return of the Board of Trade for 1866, BPP 1867 (19671) LXIV 381.

the condition of a ship for insurance purposes, were common practice, and surveys on the basis of complaints by crew members not unknown, there was no compulsory, periodic survey of vessels - except in the case of passenger-carrying steamers and emigrant ships. The protection given to miners and factory workers by the Mines and Factory Acts was not available to merchant seamen, and whereas a miner could leave an unsafe pit and a millworker could quit his workplace if the machinery was defective or dangerous, the seaman who had signed to make a voyage faced imprisonment for doing so. Gibson's action over deckloads, and the Liberal ministry's inaction over shipping losses, were to have consequences that would trouble successive administrations for almost thirty years.

The theme of this chapter that the mid-Victorian simplicity of the governing class and the anti-interventionist attitude of officials depressed the lot of seamen must be modified to some extent by noting measures, administrative acts and local initiatives that were contrary to this general trend, and by taking account of changes in the social status of ships' officers and the effect of technological advance. For example, by 1852 steam shipowners had statutory obligations in respect of fire hoses,¹ compass adjustment, distress signals, lifesaving equipment, watertight bulkheads and

1. 9 & 10 Vic c 100, s.5.

safety valves.¹ Steamers, which in 1843 had generally comprised river passenger vessels and a mere few hundred at that, had by 1866 come to make up 15% of the net registered tonnage of the United Kingdom.² Steamers made shorter voyages and paid better;³ a seaman serving in one had more time at home, was better fed and was much cleaner because waste hot water was plentiful in a steam-propelled vessel while water of any kind was scarce in sailing ships. A new rating of donkeyman-greaser evolved to deal with steam machinery in deck officer's territory: the carpenter lost status,⁴ while the superior types of Able Seamen became quarter-masters and were the first deck personnel to benefit from the four hours on - eight hours off watch system pioneered by the firemen. In 1862 every steamship that was required by law to carry a certificate⁵ master had also to carry certificated engineers,⁵ for while the

1. 14 & 15 Vic c 79, ss.3-21.

2. See Appendix One (ii).

3. See Appendix Fifteen (A) which shows that ABs in steam vessels consistently earned more than ABs in sailing ships, and Appendix Fifteen (C) which shows that officers and petty officers were also consistently better paid in steamers.

4. The practice of carpenters acting as second mates in sailing ships did not spread to steamers, and naval carpenters actually refused advancement to officer status at this time.

5. If the engine generated over a hundred horsepower there had to be two engineers - one with a first and one with a second class certificate. 25 & 26 Vic c 63, s.5.

free-traders in Parliament objected that these provisions might equally well be extended to cover traindrivers and engine-minders in cotton mills the counter-argument of public safety won the day.¹ The social status of ships' officers improved, with deck officers being admitted to the Royal Naval Reserve in 1861, and engineers in 1863.

The Board of Trade did its best to raise standards among certificated personnel, and seems to have followed a policy of favouring Certificate of Competency Officers over Certificate of Service officers when enquiries were made into shipping disasters. Twenty-three special enquiries were held in 1859: five Certificates of Service were cancelled, but no Certificates of Competency. Three years later, five Certificates of Service were cancelled and only one Certificate of Competency. It is noticeable in these years that the latter category tended to be admonished, reprimanded or have their certificates suspended for short periods: the Certificate of Service men either lost them or were ordered to take the examinations for a Certificate of Competency as a condition for reinstatement.² In 1865 the Liverpool Shipowners Association suggested university degrees for navigating officers, and the Board of Trade agreed in principle, although neither side

1. Hansard 3 164 1750-1751.

2. Wreck Returns, BPP 1860 (2623) LX 553-560 and BPP 1863 (6361) LXIII 244-254. Prior to 1866 the Board of Trade fixed penalties, and occasionally dissented from the decisions of enquiry boards.

developed the idea further.¹ The first comprehensive Collision Regulations and a rudimentary Rule of the Road at Sea were included in the 1862 Merchant Shipping Amendment Act,² and in the same year the Board of Trade transferred to Local Marine Boards the major part of the certification process. This early devolution of central government power was carried a stage further in 1866 when, during the Deslandes Enquiry which dealt with a grossly intemperate master, the principle was established that the recommendations of Local Marine Boards would generally be endorsed by the Board of Trade.³

At the local level, three initiatives may be singled out for comment. The 1850 Act had permitted the establishment of seamen's homes in the larger ports, and within ten years twenty-six such homes had been built.⁴ Central government had made little progress in dealing with desertion and men failing to join ships after contracting to do so, but the Local Marine Board at Liverpool found a partial answer to the latter problem. It was appreciated that masters who had left port short-

1. PRO MT/p 19 M.938/1865.

2. 25 & 26 Vic c 63, s.25 and Table C.

3. Papers relating to an Inquiry into Charges of Misconduct and Drunkenness against Captain J. Gordon Deslandes, late Master of the Ship 'Anne' of Liverpool, BPP 1867 (127) LXIII 169.

4. Return of Sailors' Homes, BPP 1860 (562) LX 387-401.

handed could not prosecute missing crew in person, and an Out-Door Superintendent was appointed to track down and deal with these offenders on the behalf of owners and masters.¹ The success rate was high, and the number of such cases fell from 1,872 in 1854 to 517 in 1859. Nationally, however, the problem was 'little abated'.² School ships, such as the Conway, were founded in this period,³ and the Report of the Commissioners appointed to enquire into the best means of Manning the Navy called for a fleet of twelve such ships to train merchant service officers.⁴ However, it must be said that a career at sea had few attractions for those potential entrants with free choice, for only two training ships for officers came into being and the

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1. Not all missing crew could be categorised as deserters. For example, where clothing was left on board desertion could not be assumed. The Agincourt case of 1824 (1 Hag. Adm. 271, 281) and the Ealing Grove affair in 1826 (2 Hag. Adm. 15,22) had established that absence on a drunken spree did not amount to desertion.
 2. RSCMS 1860 xxxix.
 3. In all, twenty-one training ships were established between 1856 and 1885, but only the Conway and Worcester trained future officers. Some, like the Akbar, were reformatory ships, and some, like the Formidable at Bristol, were industrial training schools. For an account of a typical school-ship in the latter category see Alston Kennerley 'Navigation School and Training Ship: Educational Provision in Plymouth for the Mercantile Marine in the Nineteenth-Century' in Stephen Fisher (ed.) West Country Maritime and Social History: Some Essays (Exeter, 1980) 53.
 4. RCMN 1869 xvii.

number of apprentices signing indentures declined steadily from 1854 to the end of the century.¹

Conditions of employment and the standard of living lagged badly when compared to those ashore, and in large part that lag may be attributed to the simplistic mood of the legislature and the doctrine of determined non-intervention followed by senior executives.

1. See Appendix Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE AGE OF REFORM, 1867 TO 1883

Changes in living and working conditions are almost invariably associated with larger events,¹ and in looking at improvements in the sailors' lot between 1867 and 1883 it is important not to place too much emphasis on the work of individuals such as James Hall and Samuel Plimsoll, Harry Leach or Walter Dickson, but to appreciate that larger forces are at work. In the period under review it is possible to list three factors that permitted, or encouraged, change. The first is an improved economic climate during the early part of this period which, despite the impact of the so-called 'Great Depression' of 1873-96, resulted long-term in a doubling of Britain's foreign trade by value in the forty years between 1870 and 1910. Second, and probably the most important in the present context, is the decline of sail tonnage from 1865 and the marked increase in steam tonnage.² Steamships were safer,³ tended to

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1. For example, large-scale provision of municipal housing in Britain can be dated from the 'homes-fit-for-heroes' agitation consequent on World War One, while silicon-chip development arising out of space exploration programmes is leading to a re-examination of hours of work, work-sharing and the problem of enforced leisure in the 1980s.
 2. Rowland describes the 1860s as a 'decisive decade' and holds that the 'eclipse of the sailing vessel was ... due ... to the re-introduction of the compound engine ... adapted for driving a screw propeller'. This technique saved between 30% and 40% of the fuel costs incurred by a single expansion engine of the same power. K.T. Rowland Steam at Sea: A History of Steam Navigation (Newton Abbot, 1970) 119-120.
 3. See Figure Four.

have better accommodation, made shorter and more regular voyages and supplied waste hot water in quantity for washing purposes. During the years covered by this chapter steam tonnage quadrupled while sail tonnage fell by a quarter. Numerically, the picture is somewhat different with the number of steam vessels not overtaking the number of sailing vessels until 1904, so that the general overview in the last third of the nineteenth-century is one of a relatively large, but steadily declining, fleet of small sailing ships and a smaller, but rapidly rising, number of larger steamers.¹ These large steamers demanded large crews with new skills, and in particular brought in an element in the workforce that had undergone a shore apprenticeship and had the expectations of skilled land workers.² The third factor is an administrative response to just grievances resulting in changes in legislation and in attitudes to the sea-going workforce. At first, this response was wholly legalistic in character, as may be shown by examining the questions of accommodation for seamen and their victualling.

Historically, seamen had been expected to

1. See Appendices One and Two.

2. A point given emphasis by H. Campbell McMurray in his 'Ships' Engineers: Their Status and Position on Board, c. 1830-65'. Stephen Fisher (ed). West Country Maritime and Social History: Some Essays (Exeter, 1980) 91.

work, eat and sleep above decks,¹ and when in the seventeenth-century they had been permitted to sleep below they were first accommodated in the orlop,² and then in the fo'c's'le. The fo'c's'le was triangular in shape and of little use as cargo space: being at the forward end of the ship it could not be fitted with large portholes and hatches, and it was often necessary for anchor chains or warps to pass through it for storage in the chain locker. Consequently, fo'c's'les tended to be damp, dark, dirty and ill-ventilated. Accommodation was not covered by legislation prior to 1850 when s.63 of the Mercantile Marine Act stipulated that each seaman who was named in the agreement should be allowed 'nine superficial feet' of living space, which was also to be well-ventilated and unobstructed by stores.³ In 1854 this provision was

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1. Sir Walter Raleigh believed that 'Cabins are but sluttish dens which breed sickness' and kept his men out in the open air. Quoted by F.P. Ellis in 'The Atmospheric Environment Between Decks in the Royal Navy' British Medical Journal, 1966 No.1 1057-1060. In the late eighteenth-century there was no below-deck accommodation for the crews of slavers during the Middle Passage - see HCSPEC 72 309 - and Schedule A of 32 Geo 3 c 52 specified that a deck shelter should be provided for crew when the ship was full of slaves.
 2. The fore upper part of the hold. Seamen were also accommodated at other parts of a ship where no cargo or stores could be stowed such as the steerage, or tiller flat, and the half-deck at the break of the poop.
 3. Originally, the clause had called for twelve superficial feet, but the Liverpool Shipowners Association used the 'hot bunk' argument, saying that twelve feet was excessive because 'not more than half the crew are ever below at one time'. PRO BT/1 477 643/1850.

extended by s.231 to give each man nine superficial feet if sleeping in a hammock and twelve superficial feet if sleeping in a bunk. There was to be six feet of headroom in sleeping places, which were to be kept free from stores and 'properly caulked'.¹ Each seaman was to have fifty-four cubic feet of space if sleeping in a hammock and seventy-two cubic feet if sleeping in a bunk. At first hearing this seems adequate, but seventy-two cubic feet represents a space some six feet by six feet by two feet, and as the minimum base area of a bunk is six feet by two feet it was necessary for builders to fit double, or even treble, rows of bunks to the curving inner timbers of the wettest part of a ship in order to get any space for movement in a fo'c's'le.² It was recognised that this provision was sub-standard,³ and when collier seamen made a direct complaint the Board of Trade was able to conduct an investigation and suggest new legislation.

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1. This provision was a dead letter, and the rigging of waterproof sheets over hammocks was commonplace. See Walter Runciman, Collier Brigs and Their Sailors 37 and Merchant Seamen's Accommodation, BPP 1867 (125) LXIII 352.
 2. Bunks that are to be used during a voyage cannot be fitted athwartships as they will pitch the occupant out when the ship rolls in a sea. Hence, in sea-going vessels, the necessity of fore-and-aft construction following the curve of the bow.
 3. One ardent reformer, Captain Henry Toynbee, read a well-reasoned paper entitled 'The Social Condition of Seamen' at the United Service Institution on 16 July 1866 and suggested an increase to fifteen superficial feet of living space and regular inspection of accommodation. Text at PRO MT/9 26 M.3049/1866.

While the seamen's strike of 1866 was drawing to a close the Seaham men petitioned the Board of Trade to allege that their ships were under-manned, worn-out and had leaky and cramped fo'c's's'les. They demanded parity of conditions with factory hands ashore, and while T.H. Farrer took his usual line when replying to the effect that 'it is impossible for the law to determine the number or quality of the crew necessary to man different ships' and 'no seaman is obliged to engage for a ship which he knows to be unseaworthy', he did agree to send a surveyor to Seaham to investigate complaints about accommodation.¹ The surveyor reported that the fo'c's's'les of the ships in question had the requisite cubic capacity but were half-filled with warps, had only three and a half feet headroom in places and leaked inordinately.² Enquiries at other ports brought confirmation that the 1854 minimum standard of accommodation was now thought to be inadequate. The surveyor at Leith said bluntly that nine superficial feet was insufficient for men sleeping in hammocks,³ and called attention to the case of coasters which

1. BPP 1867 LXIII 339-341.

2. BPP 1867 LXIII 348-349.

3. The problem is that it is the stretchers inserted in the outer hammock strings that give a hammock width and comfort. A hammock is six feet long, and the strings should be at least three feet to the hook to let the stretchers do their work. A hammock slung in nine feet would be constricting for the sleeper, who would find himself in a U-shaped posture for much of the time.

anchored almost daily and thus could not caulk the hawseholes each time so as to protect the sleeping crew from wind and water. The Port of London surveyor pointed out that the 1854 Act had not legislated for the lighting of crew accommodation and that the 'well-ventilated' proviso dating from 1850 was being breached where fo'c's'les had only a two-foot square scuttle to supply fresh air. He went on to suggest the provision of privies for crew because the heads were unsafe in bad weather.¹ The Board of Trade surveyor at Glasgow reported that a seaman living in cramped conditions tended to give up his seachest - which took up valuable floor space - and put his effects in a bag stowed at the foot of his bunk. The consequence was that

Long ere the expiry of a voyage out of the home trade his entire outfit of both wet clothes and dry, dirty and clean, are either tossing about the bed or bundled up in one incongruous mass into this bag, his only receptacle.

The same official suggested that officers fared little better than men.

I entered the stateroom where a first and second mate had to lie, and when both were standing neither could take a single step in any one direction and I could well

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1. BPP 1867 LXIII 352. W.R. Thrower describes the 'heads' thus. 'The normal place for voiding in a ship was called the heads: this was in the bows where 'seats of convenience', consisting of spaced planks, were provided. The seats on one side were used by the officers and those on the other side by the crew. But it was only possible to use them in fine weather ... the bilges of these sailing ships always contained plenty of human excrement'. W.R. Thrower, Life at Sea in the Age of Sail (Chichester, 1972) 82.

believe that only one could dress at a time.¹

Politically, it was a good moment for new legislation. The outgoing President of the Board of Trade, Milner Gibson, had been unable to get a Merchant Shipping Bill through on 19 July 1866, and two days previously an attempt to set up a Royal Commission on the deterioration of British seamen had been abandoned.² The new Tory administration was determined to show it could do better, and the Merchant Shipping Act, 1867 went through virtually unamended under the guidance of Sir Stafford Northcote and the Duke of Richmond.³ In moving the Second Reading in the Lords the Duke of Richmond made an emphatic reference to the new principle that crew spaces were to be exempted from tonnage dues - a matter of some importance in the immediate future for the advantage it gave Board of Trade officials when dealing with shipowners.⁴ The 1867 Act⁵ contained

1. BPP 1867 LXIII 364, 371.

2. CJ 121, 457 and 464.

3. Sir Stafford Northcote was President of the Board of Trade between July 1866 and March 1867. Charles Henry, Sixth Duke of Richmond (1818-1903) held various cabinet offices in the Conservative governments of Lord Derby, Disraeli and Lord Salisbury.

4. Hansard 3 188 850. A letter from the Board of Trade dated 4 March 1869 instructed the Liverpool surveyor as to how he should deal with an uncooperative owner. 'The creation of privies is not compulsory, but if they are not provided then no deduction can be allowed from tonnage on account of crew spaces'. Merchant Ships (Seamen's Accommodation), BPP 1868-69 (375) LV 444.

5. 30 & 31 Vic c 124. The Merchant Shipping Act of 1867 was not repealed until 1949.

minimum remedies for the four major problems of the last decade - poor accommodation, scurvy, medical stores and sanitary arrangements. Section 9 of the Act increased the minimum living space slightly to 12 superficial feet or 72 cubic feet per man, and this standard obtained until 1906 when it was further raised to 120 cubic feet for existing vessels and 15 square feet per man in new ships.¹ Section 4 reflected the persistent lobbying of Harry Leach described in the previous chapter, with its emphasis on limejuice being obtained only from bonded warehouses, stored in glass bottles and containing 15% alcohol. Medicines and a book of medical instructions were henceforth to be carried in accordance with a Board of Trade scale, and privies were to be constructed for the use of seamen by section 9(3). Compulsory medical inspection, which had been urged seven years before by the influential Liverpool Mercantile Marine Association,² was

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1. It is difficult for twentieth-century man to appreciate how minimal these revised standards were, although a comparison with eighteenth-century prison conditions may be helpful. In 1773 the great prison reformer, John Howard, fired public indignation with his description of conditions in York Prison. A cell - described as 'horribly small' - had a space of 414 cubic feet, about six times greater than the minimum space granted to seamen by the 1867 Act. See Hepworth Dixon John Howard and the Prison World of Europe (1850 edition) 136.
 2. RSCMS 1860 QQ.2962-2964. The Liverpool Mercantile Marine Association, founded in 1857, had over 1,000 members who were principally masters, engineers, merchants and shipowners. It was an informal officer's trade union, had a reading room for members near the docks and managed the school-ship Conway.

instituted by s.10. Section 7 was a major defeat for the anti-interventionists. A sick seaman, whose illness or disability arose from the neglect of the owner or master, was to have his hospital expenses paid by them, and this section reflects the wishes of the Seamen's Hospital Society who had been complaining bitterly for years that niggardly masters kept men on short commons during a voyage and then sent them to Dreadnought on returning to England in a weak or diseased state. Employer's liability lay in the future, but s.7 is an early indicator as to which way the wind of public and informed opinion is blowing.

The 1867 Act had two wholly new features - lavatories and medical inspection - but it must be stressed that diffusion in respect of the former and comprehensive performance in the case of the latter provision was achieved in a leisurely way. Conscientious surveyors toured the shipyards chalking diagrams on bulkheads in order to instruct foreman shipwrights as to the fitting of privies,¹ but the Act did not apply to existing vessels and in at least one instance the delay in diffusion can be put at twenty years.² Medical

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1. BPP 1868-9 LV 521-523. Letter from the Chief Shipwright Surveyor to the Board of Trade dated 10 May 1869.
 2. Captain Thomas Garry Fraser sailed for the first time in a ship provided with crew lavatories in 1887, having kept a detailed account of his voyages since 1865. Margory Gee (ed.) Captain Fraser's Voyages (1979) 180.

inspection was of the simplest kind, with doctors instructed to look primarily for signs of scurvy, dysentery and venereal disease. Harry Leach, the resident medical officer in Dreadnought, wrote to the Board of Trade on 15 February 1868 to observe that 'Many men make good sailors who limp in their gait, are deformed, and have deficiencies in their sight, speech and hearing', and Inspectors Circular No. 4 issued in March 1868 echoed the sentiment, added a bureaucratic safeguard, and duly instructed port doctors that 'Deformities, or deficiency in sight or hearing, although they may not, in the opinion of the Inspector, render the Seaman unfit for duty at sea, should be recorded by him in his report'.¹ At the end of the century medical inspection was still cursory, and sometimes non-existent, as Thomas Oliver's major study of conditions in dangerous trades indicates.

Much ill-health and disease would be avoided if more care were exercised in the selection of men for the Mercantile Marine. The Merchant Shipping Act (section 10) provides for the medical inspection of seamen if required, but as a matter of fact, this provision is practically a dead letter, and men are allowed to sign on without any enquiry as to their physical fitness for their occupation.²

However, while formal medical inspection in port may have been somewhat of a charade, the 1867 Act did make a significant impact in respect of health care

1. PRO MT/9 40 M.2328/1868.

2. Thomas Oliver, Dangerous Trades 189.

during a voyage. Harry Leach produced the first edition of the Ship Captain's Medical Guide in 1868,¹ and a revised scale of medicines required to be carried in British merchant vessels was published.² Deaths from disease fell by a third in the decade from 1867 to 1876.³ There was less success in countering the incidence of venereal disease among seafarers in this period when prophylactic measures that might have curbed the spread of syphilis and gonhorrea were not put into effect because of a division, or evasion, of responsibility between government departments. Dr. Walter Dickson called for the compulsory examination - and detention - of prostitutes working in dock areas: in other words an extension of the Contagious Diseases Act to cover merchant seamen, but received a dusty answer from the Board of Trade. T.H. Farrer minuted the file - 'this matter is one which the Board of Trade as a department are unable to deal' - and sent the papers to the Poor Law Board. The latter department made no reply.⁴ The s.7 requirement on owners to pay

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1. It was sanctioned by the Board of Trade as an authorised book of instruction on 4 February 1868, and a copy may be found at PRO MT/9 39 M.1111/1868. The Ship Captain's Medical Guide used simple language and gave clear instructions. The entry for treating sunstroke is as follows. 'Send your patient at once into the coldest place that you can find, get his head shaved, apply cold to it, and give an ounce of castor oil immediately, repeating the dose until the bowels are freely and thoroughly voided four or five times'.
 2. London Gazette (3812) 7 July 1868.
 3. See Appendix Eight (B).
 4. PRO MT/9 39 M.1371/1868.

the hospital expenses of men whose disability was attributable to ship conditions was to be tested many times in the years between 1867 and 1906, with the tide of legal opinion and practice moving very slowly in the seaman's favour. Initially, there was a tendency for masters to record that injuries or disease were in a non-attributable category, to deduct 'reasonable expenses' from the man's account until hospital expenditure was greater than wages due, and then enter a discharge by 'mutual consent' in the log, leaving the man stranded.¹ This device became shopworn, and then a standard three shillings a day² was deducted from the wages of sick seamen left abroad to pay for hospital care and travelling expenses while coming home as Distressed British Seamen, which usually left them either destitute, or, as J. Havelock Wilson the great union leader notes in his autobiography, a few shillings in debt.³ In the field of civil law, it was later

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1. As in the case of George Reid. Reid was discharged from the Burton in Oslo on 18 July 1870 suffering from scurvy. He had £6-11s wages due, but the account showed there to be hospital expenses of £11-18-9d and the log showed a discharge by mutual consent. Reid's protest failed, and the Board of Trade put out Circular 527 in January 1872 reminding Consuls abroad that limejuice must be supplied to seamen on the basis laid down by s.4 of the 1867 Act, thus obviously giving a heavy hint that where sharp practice of this kind was employed Consuls would do well to look at areas where the practitioner was himself vulnerable. See PRO MT/9 58 M.4420/1871.
 2. A figure fixed by the Board of Trade in 1874. See Distressed Seamen, BPP 1875 (108) LXVIII 69.
 3. J. Havelock Wilson, My Stormy Voyage Through Life (1925) 82.

confirmed that an owner had an obligation to provide medical attention until a home port was reached,¹ but before 1906 only men who had received 'hurt and injury in the service of the ship'² could take advantage of s.7: the remainder suffering from illness or disease had to see their hard-earned wages go in hospital and travelling expenses before the owner, or the state in the form of the Board of Trade, made a contribution.

In the last chapter it was shown that the seaman's diet was monotonous, deficient in vitamins and chiefly made up of the coarsest kinds of salted and dried food, and in looking at the administrative response to complaints about diet from the mid-1860s it will be shown that a fine legalistic attitude emerged which deferred the institution of a statutory diet scale for forty years. In 1867, many leading British shipowners victualled their men by reference to the Liverpool Scale,³ which was basically a pound of hard biscuit⁴ and a pound and a half of salt meat a day.⁵

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1. Anderson v. Rayner (1903) 1 K.B. 589.
 2. This is the phrase used in s.207(1) of the 1894 Act, which repeated the s.7 provision of 1867.
 3. See Appendix Eleven (F).
 4. To make them more palatable, biscuits were often pounded to dust in linen bags and then mixed with jam or treacle to make 'dandyfunk'. A mixture with salt meat was called 'lobscouse', and a kind of sea-pie was often concocted by baking layers of crushed biscuit, salt meat and peas in a pannikin on the galley stove.
 5. That is, before cooking. After cooking, the portion might be about three-quarters of a pound by weight.

The Board of Trade was well aware of the shortcomings of the Liverpool Scale through the lobbying of the Seamen's Hospital Society, and in February of that year issued a circular to Marine Boards inviting comment on the diet of seamen. Newcastle had no comment to make, believing that it was 'an open matter to be agreed when the articles are signed' and Sunderland Local Marine Board thought that 'it would scarcely do in these days of freedom to have recourse to a compulsory dietary scale'.¹ These were typical replies from Local Marine Boards, and as the Boards were dominated by cost-conscious shipowners it is hardly surprising that there was a general agreement for no change. Seamen's organisations and individual spokesmen took a contrary view. The Seamen's Parliamentary Committee wrote to the Board of Trade saying that they wanted a statutory diet scale and the regular inspection of food,² while the Society for Improving the Condition of Merchant Seamen called for the addition of fresh potatoes to the diet and the supply of clean water and biscuits in airtight tins.³ Harry Leach suggested that the salt meat and dried peas component in seamen's diets be reduced and replaced by additional fresh water,

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1. Correspondence on the Subject of Dietary Scales on board Merchant Ships, BPP 1867-68 (407) LXIII 161-184.
 2. Based at 163 Duke Street, Liverpool, this was an organisation of serving seamen, and T.H. Farrer noted: 'This is worth reading - not because it is new but because it comes from the seamen'. Their memorandum at PRO MT/9 40 M.2495/1868 and dated 6 February 1868.
 3. From a shilling pamphlet entitled Report of the Committee of the Society for Improving the Condition of Merchant Seamen on PRO MT/9 36 M.5489/1867. The Committee included Harry Leach, Thomas Gray, the shipowner Robert Wigram and Edwin Chadwick, the poor-law and public health reformer.

potatoes, pickles and preserved meat.¹ The material was considered by Thomas Gray, whose anti-interventionist views have already been referred to, and Gray made it clear at an early stage that he saw an approved scale of provisions merely as a suggestion to shipowners, or as one which was to apply 'only to those cases where ... the dietary scale is not filled in (on agreements) or ... is obscure or incomprehensible'.² He was determined to avoid a situation where the Board of Trade could be called on to arbitrate between owners and seamen over items of diet.

In January 1868 Thomas Gray wrote to Harry Leach and Dr. Walter Dickson asking them to draw up a scale of provisions for merchant seamen. Initially, the two medical men sent in separate replies. Leach gave each seaman a gallon of water a day, unlimited bread (biscuit), an additional pound and a half of preserved meat weekly together with a half pound of preserved vegetables, half a pound of dried fruit and a quarter pound of butter. Dr. Dickson produced a fortnightly scale based on preserved meat, salt meat, soup and bouilli³ and a water ration of one and a half gallons a day.⁴ Thomas Gray was testy about these divergences.

1. BPP 1867-68 LXIII 166.

2. BPP 1867-68 LXIII 163.

3. From the French: stewed or boiled meat. The nearest modern equivalent would be tinned pie filling.

4. BPP 1867-68 LXIII 166-167.

'Two scales', he wrote, 'will give the Board a very great deal of trouble and will still leave the question open ...'.¹ On 13 February 1868 Dickson and Leach produced a combined scale, and it appears in full as Appendix Eleven (H). Gray then circularised this scale to Local Marine Boards and canvassed their reaction. Hull thought it was too generous, and Belfast wanted to keep the water ration down to a gallon a day. Leith rejected the scale outright, while London objected to a water allowance for washing as 'there is always plenty alongside'.² The publication of this scale followed, but the legal situation was not altered in any way, and the scale was in no sense a statutory one. Section 149 of the 1854 Act was still operative, and while a 'scale of provisions' corresponding to that in Gray's circular was to appear on crew agreements for almost the next forty years the Board of Trade was always able to take the line that it was a scale agreed between master and man. Indeed, when giving evidence in 1873 Thomas Gray vehemently denied that he had in any way 'recommended' this scale,³ and the assessment must be that while the Board of Trade had been manoeuvred by the anti-scurvy lobby into publishing a scale of victualling for the information of shipowners, the latter were not compelled to take any notice of it. What

1. BPP 1867-68 LXIII 168.

2. BPP 1867-68 LXIII 173.

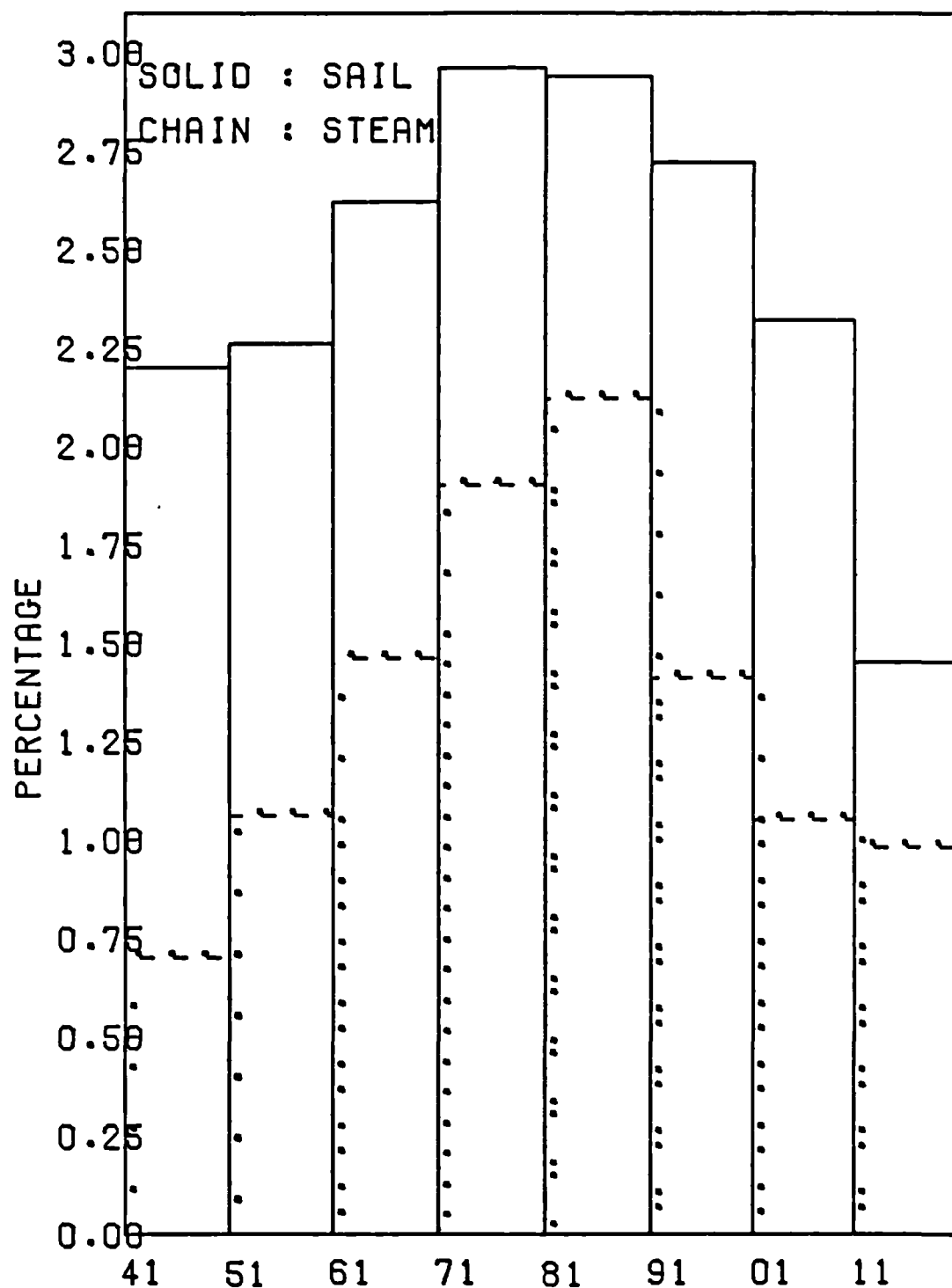
3. PRRCUS 1873 QQ.11,420-11,428.

happened in many cases was that the old Liverpool Scale, plus rice and extra sugar, continued to be supplied.¹ As a convinced anti-interventionist, Thomas Gray had intervened to the least of his ability. The Board of Trade victualling scale that he sanctioned was a cosmetic exercise with the appearance, but not the substance, of legality.

In Chapter Three the point was made that exceptional shipping losses in the 1830s and 1840s had led to enquiry and reforms in a number of areas, and in this chapter the same process will be followed in respect of the period from the late 1860s to the early 1880s. The seminal change from sail to steam propulsion forced the ageing sailing fleet into the less profitable bulk trades where standards of upkeep tended to be low, and losses rose. Appendix Thirteen shows that sailing ship losses peaked numerically in the two decades between 1861 and 1880, with steamship losses highest in the 1880s. Figure Four shows losses as a percentage of ships registered, and it may be seen that sail losses were invariably higher and that the trend towards an overall reduction in losses of all kinds does not begin until the 1890s. It will be

1. In the Pole Star in 1881 the so-called Board of Trade Scale was identical with the Liverpool Scale except for rice and fourteen ounces of sugar a week. Captain E.W.C. Beggs 'Looking Back' Transactions of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society VIII (1953-54) 7.

LOSSES AS A PERCENTAGE OF SHIP TYPES
REGISTERED, 1841-50 TO 1911-20



(SOURCE) BOARD OF TRADE RETURNS OF SHIPPING
CASUALTIES (BPP) GROUPED BY DECADES.
SEE APPENDIX THIRTEEN (A).

shown here that the legislation of 1871, 1873 and 1875 was well-meaning, but not very effective, and in the next chapter that the 1876 Act with which the name of Samuel Plimsoll is associated was not wholly effective until strengthened by further legislation in the 1890s. There is, however, quite a good correlation between the coming into effect of these laws and a reduction in crew deaths by drowning, so that reforms in the area of ship safety can be regarded as conferring a permanent gain.

The Board of Trade had been aware of the dilemma facing merchant seamen who had contracted to sail in unseaworthy ships since the 1850s,¹ and in 1864 put out a circular to magistrates recommending that Board of Trade surveyors be employed whenever men appeared before the Courts on disciplinary charges and cited unseaworthiness as the reason for refusing to sail.² At the same time, there was public concern over the rise

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1. A petition to Queen Victoria in 1855 complained that seamen were being compelled to sail in unseaworthy ships under threat of imprisonment. The Board of Trade obtained a legal opinion to the effect that seaworthiness was implied when a man signed-on, but that proof of unseaworthiness lies with the man who refuses duty - PRO MT/9 60 M.7015/1871. The civil liability of a shipowner to provide a seaworthy ship was finally established by Steel v. State Line Steamship Co. in 1877 (3 App. Cas. 72).
 2. Circular 192 of 29 November 1864. Copy on BPP 1873 (82) LIX 288.

in shipping losses,¹ and confirmation from Board of Trade enquiries as to the causes. Generally, they were that vessels were old, leaky, over-insured, heavily loaded or unrepaired after damage. A typical case was that of the Elizabeth which was lost in 1869.

The Elizabeth was a wooden sailing ship, schooner rigged. She was 43 years old and was insured upon an annual policy in the Dundee Clubs in the sum of £550 and had been so insured for 11 years. For some years she had been employed in the coal trade between Dundee and Sunderland, and had become so weak and leaky, probably from her great age, that it was found necessary to pump her every hour while in harbour, and light and constantly when at sea. In the early part of 1868 she struck upon some stones at the entrance to Dundee Harbour, but was assisted off, and it appears that she had not been taken into dock or received any material repairs subsequent to that casualty. On the 16th April 1869 she left Sunderland with a crew of five hands all told, for Dundee, having on board a full cargo consisting 180 tons of coals. On the following day, in the afternoon, the wind began to blow heavily, and it kept increasing until 4am of the 18th, when a heavy sea struck the ship, carried away the port bulwarks and the boat, threw her on her beam-ends, and in all probability

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1. Briefly, this concern sprang from the heavy losses of ships in 1866, the case of the Utopia in 1867 (see PRO MT/9 36 M.5156/1867) which was ventilated in The Nautical Magazine, and the article 'Our Ships and Seamen' which appeared in the Newcastle Daily Chronicle and the Shipping Gazette and Lloyds' List in November 1867. The author was James Hall, a Tynemouth shipowner and philanthropist. Hall's arguments for introducing legislation to prevent unseaworthy ships being sent to sea were later adopted by Samuel Plimsoll, the energetic and somewhat unscrupulous MP for Derby. Hall's initiative is acknowledged in the NMM monograph by Neville Upham entitled The Load Line - A Hallmark of Safety published in 1978.

started her covering board. She never righted, and three hours afterwards, notwithstanding the pumps were kept constantly at work, she went down. The crew jumped into the sea. Two of the men were rescued by a passing steamer, the Master, Mate and a seaman were drowned.¹

The comment of the court of enquiry illustrates the contemporary attitude towards losses of this type.

The court were of the opinion that the loss of the Elizabeth might be attributed to her great age, apparently inefficient repairs, and to stress of weather when deeply coal laden. While deprecating the custom of employing old vessels of this description in the coasting trade to the manifest danger of life, the court pointed out that the crews of ships are free agents, and that in the absence of any statutory enactment to the contrary the court could do no more than call attention to the practice.²

Seamen who had signed articles were not, as the quotation above suggests, free agents, and they could be imprisoned if they refused to sail in an unseaworthy ship. Moreover, imprisonment preceded survey because the onus of proof lay on the defendant,³ and in many cases magistrates declined to call for a survey at all, or the survey was a cursory one. Imprisonment

1. Wreck Return, 1869, BPP 1870 (300) LX 765.

2. BPP 1870 LX 765.

3. In 1873 T.H. Farrer described the legal position to the Royal Commission on Unseaworthy Ships in the following terms. 'Is the man who refuses to go to sea in an unseaworthy ship a deserter? No, but the burden of proof lies on him'. PRRCUS 1873 Q.246. Farrer was quoting from the legal opinion obtained by the Board of Trade in 1855 - PRO MT/9 60 M.7015/1871.

had been the common response to a refusal of duty since 1854,¹ but it came to be appreciated that the use of s.243 of the 1854 Act to punish what might be a legitimate complaint was less than fair, and the Board of Trade began to collect statistics about imprisonment. In 1870 some 467 seamen were committed to prison for refusing to proceed to sea, and unseaworthiness, insufficient accommodation, defective equipment, overloading or under-manning was alleged in 132 cases.² In only one case in that year was a defendant dismissed because proof of unseaworthiness was readily available.³ Seamen refusing to sail were dealt with in exactly the same way as deserters or drunkards who had missed their ships, and a steady stream of complaints reached the Home Office and the Board of Trade from fellow seamen, prison chaplains and those concerned with the welfare of seamen ashore. James Hall had tried to introduce a Merchant Shipping Bill in 1869, but it was stifled by the shipowners in

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1. The Report of the Inspector of Prisons for Southern and Western Districts in 1854 had revealed that in Plymouth Gaol fifty-three out of 239 male prisoners confined during that year had been seamen who had refused to sail because of unseaworthiness or under-manning. Twentieth Report of the Inspectors of Prisons of Great Britain, BPP 1854-55 (2005) XXVI 77-78.
 2. Return of Merchant Ship Crews Committed to Prison in 1870, 1871 and 1872 for Refusing to Proceed to Sea, BPP 1873 (83) LIX 245-275.
 3. A seaman from the schooner Margaret secured an acquittal at Fraserburgh because evidence of unseaworthiness was readily available, while an Irish seaman was discharged at Sligo because the case hinged on a wage dispute rather than a refusal of duty. See BPP 1873 LIX 271 and 275.

Parliament, and Samuel Plimsoll's¹ First Merchant Shipping Survey Bill of 1871 - which was framed specifically to institute a load-line and compulsory survey - was condemned by Board of Trade officials² and blocked in the House. The Gladstonian Liberals were not insensitive to the tide of public opinion, and in 1871 produced a Merchant Shipping Act³ containing their solution to the dual problem of unseaworthiness and imprisonment for refusing to sail in an unseaworthy ship.

Section 4 of this Act decreed that draught figures be painted on the stem and stern of British-registered ships, and s.5 that the draught must be recorded.⁴ Section 7 was the kernel of the measure as far as crew were concerned, because it said that if 25% of a crew, or at least five members of any crew over twenty in number, complained that a ship was unseaworthy and refused to sail in her a court could order a survey.

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1. Samuel Plimsoll (1824-98), MP for Derby 1868-1880. Eulogised by George Peters in The Plimsoll Line (1975), characterised as a persistent social climber and self-publicist by David Masters in The Plimsoll Mark of 1955 and described by a contemporary, Thomas Brassey, as 'too eager to level his lance at all comers ... too sensational, and not always accurate'. Papers and Addresses (1894) 20. A powerful demagogue who lacked scruple, he nevertheless mobilized public opinion behind a just cause.
 2. Thomas Gray noted on the file: 'The Bill is too silly to require minute examination', and added emphatically (and incorrectly) that 'surveys don't prevent loss of life'. PRO MT/9 60 M.1577/1871.
 3. 34 & 35 Vic c 110.
 4. It was this section that enabled Plimsoll to badger the Board of Trade for large quantities of information, as they had a record of the draught of each ship leaving a British port.

This clause had been hotly debated in the House,¹ with many members wanting a majority of the crew to be complainants before a survey was ordered, but Chichester Fortescue² quoted the Balaklava case³ and was supported by Joseph Henley, a former President of the Board of Trade and member of a leading shipping family, who suggested 25% as being sufficient to give credence to a complaint. Section 10 of the 1871 Act gave the Board of Trade power to declare a ship unseaworthy following survey, and s.11 made it a misdemeanour for a shipowner to send an unseaworthy British vessel to sea. Unfortunately, the 1871 measure did not specify overloading as a cause of unseaworthiness, and while the Act sufficed to deal with patently rotten ships whose crews complained of the fact, it could not be put into effect to prevent the sailing of grossly overloaded ships whether they complained or not.

Consequently, the 1871 Merchant Shipping Act did nothing to cut down either the number of men committed to prison for refusing to go to sea or the number of allegations of unseaworthiness. In 1871 and 1872 a

1. Hansard 3 208 1062.

2. Chichester Samuel Fortescue (1832-98), was MP for Louth from 1847 to 1874 and President of the Board of Trade from 1871-74.

3. The Balaklava seamen had been sent to prison for four weeks' hard labour by the Deal magistrates in 1871 for refusing to sail in her, and the ship foundered shortly after their sentences began. See BPP 1873 LIX 254.

further 1,171 seamen were committed to prison for offences of this kind, and while in 1870 some 28% of them had alleged unseaworthiness and associated deficiencies as the reason for refusing to sail the figure rose to 32% in 1871 and 1872.¹ The practical application of the Act was in the hands of local magistrates, who in port towns were often shipowners, and the case of the seamen from the Elizabeth Knowles in 1872 demonstrates how easily miscarriages of justice could occur. This ship had put into Milford Haven in a leaky condition, and four seamen who refused to sail further in her were gaoled by the Milford magistrates after a cursory survey by unqualified personnel who declared her 'not unseaworthy'.² The four seamen wrote to the Board of Trade from prison to ask for a proper survey, and in the meantime the Elizabeth Knowles had set off for South America, but was compelled to put back to Milford Haven the same day with three feet of water in the hold. The Board of Trade surveyor condemned her, and the four seamen were released just before the expiry of their sentences. In the same year the Tenby magistrates imprisoned eleven men from the Harvest Home under remarkably similar circumstances. Tenby was not on the list for attendance by a Board of Trade surveyor, and T.H. Farrer declined to intervene, minuting the

1. BPP 1873 LIX 245-275.

2. One of the 'surveyors' was a retired harbourmaster. The reference for the Elizabeth Knowles case and that of the Huntress is Merchant Ship (Surveys), BPP 1873 (82) LIX 283-312, while that for the Harvest Home is PRO MT/9 74 M.5999, M.5946 and M.5624/1873 and Ships Detained as Unseaworthy, BPP 1873 (364) LIX 447-455.

file - 'I scarcely think this is case in which we should interfere with the responsibility of the Home Office'. The seamen served four weeks apiece at Haverfordwest although it was admitted that the Harvest Home had only six oars to propel two boats and was making about an inch of water an hour in the hold. In both cases there was no legal remedy for this improper detention, and no compensation was awarded. A further problem was that the 1871 Act applied solely to British-registered ships. When, in 1873, the Huntress was found unseaworthy at Cardiff her owners sent her out of port under a foreign flag, and the port officials were powerless to stop her.

Cases of this kind provided material for Samuel Plimsoll, the Member for Derby. The publication of Our Seamen: An Appeal in 1873 was well-timed, and the book may be seen as a splendid propaganda coup, but stripped of its rhetoric the work made three major points. Plimsoll said that shipowners sent old and unseaworthy ships out heavily insured in the hope that they might founder and provide a profit; that masters and men were 'over-persuaded' to sale in unsafe ships and that the resulting loss of life meant that shipowners, and underwriters were locked into what could be termed a 'homicidal system'. In the event, only the first item was pursued in Parliament by Plimsoll, who on 4 March 1873 called for a Royal Commission on 'coffin ships'.¹

1. This phrase, with which the name of Samuel Plimsoll is associated was lifted by him from a constituent's letter.

The specific issues he wished explored were

under-manning, bad storage, deck loading, deficient engine power, over-insurance, defective construction, improper lengthening, want of repair, the necessity for the employment of certificated masters in waters between Brest and the Elbe,¹ rate of speed lawful in fogs and a code of signals.²

No mention was made in the House of excessive persuasion being employed in support of a 'homicidal system' - the emphasis being wholly on the safety aspect where public interest could be relied on for support. When the terms of reference for the Royal Commission were announced they were still more narrowly directed towards an investigation of unseaworthiness arising from 'over-loading, deck-loading, defective construction, condition, equipment, form of machinery, age, improper stowage and undermanning'.³

While the Royal Commission on Unseaworthy Ships was sitting a piece of stop-gap legislation was rushed through to placate the reformers. Described subsequently as 'tentative' in the Final Report of the Royal Commission on Unseaworthy Ships,⁴ the Merchant Shipping Act of 1873 sought, by s.9, to make amends for the past treatment of men who had refused to sail in unsafe ships.

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1. The Home Trade limits as laid down by Schedule B of the 1835 Act.
 2. Hansard 3 214 1319-1330.
 3. Hansard 3 215 299.
 4. Referred to hereafter as FRRCUS 1874. The reference here is BPP 1874 (C.1027) XXXIV vii.

Compensation was henceforth payable to men imprisoned for refusing duty when a subsequent survey exonerated them, and the amount paid was to be fixed by the Court dealing with the case. Section 12 gave the power to detain and survey alleged defective or unseaworthy ships, and by s.13 the fees of the surveyors were paid by the Board of Trade if the vessel proved seaworthy, and by the owners if it did not. One noticeable effect of the 1873 legislation was that the number of unseaworthy ships ordered to be repaired or scrapped rose, and when s.12 was reinforced by the addition of the power of provisional detention in 1876 the figure rose again. A return of ships surveyed under the provisions of s.12 between 1 August 1874 and 31 December 1874 shows that all the 118 vessels surveyed for defects during the period required repair, and in the longer period from 5 August 1873 to 31 December 1874 only fourteen out of the 558 ships alleged defective were found seaworthy.¹ This ratio of about 97% unseaworthy to 3% seaworthy continued to be the rule during the remainder of the decade. In the last six months of 1877 all but three of the 106 ships detained as unseaworthy were found to be so,² and in the first

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1. Return of Vessels Ordered to be Surveyed by the Board of Trade, BPP 1875 (C.1152) LXVIII 341-354.
 2. Return of Ships Provisionally Detained as Unsafe, BPP 1878 (C.1940) LXVII 77.

six months of 1879 out of 331 ships detained 319 were found to have defects.¹ In round terms, the number of unseaworthy ships dealt with by Board of Trade surveyors doubled between 1873 and 1879, from something under 300 a year to over 600 vessels a year being surveyed. In the same years deaths of merchant seamen by drowning fell from around 2,800 a year to 2,000 a year.²

When the Final Report of the Royal Commission on Unseaworthy Ships was published the principal conclusion was the rejection of compulsory and universal survey.³ The reason given was that the Board of Trade already had adequate powers to deal with unseaworthy and overloaded ships, and for the same reason there was no blanket prohibition of deck cargoes. There are four key phrases in this Report which make clear the line that the Commissioners were following. It is stated that shipowners could 'reasonably complain that they had been harassed' as 'many enactments ... have been mischievous and should be modified or repealed'. It was suggested that ...

enactments relating to the punishment of the master or crew whose negligence had occasioned loss of life or property should be framed of a more definite and stringent character than those in existence.

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1. Return of Ships Provisionally Detained as Unsafe, BPP 1878-79 (C.2391) LXIV 191-198.
 2. See Appendix Eight (B).
 3. FRRCUS 1874 i.

The Commissioners believed that British seamen were, in general, 'deficient in thrift, in sobriety, in discipline', while the 'anxiety of Parliament to protect the seaman, to treat him as incompetent to take care of himself ... had exercised a bad influence on his character'.¹ The tone of the Report is remarkably similar to that of the 1836 Report of the Select Committee on Shipwrecks, with the emphasis on the faults of seamen rather than the deficiencies of ships. Only three constructive suggestions are made in the Report: that advance notes be made illegal, that compulsory apprenticeship be revived and that some type of superannuation scheme be set up in place of the long-vanished Merchant Seamen's Fund. The Final Report of the Royal Commission on Unseaworthy Ships and ship losses in the Black Sea grain trade did lead on to the Merchant Shipping Act of 1875,² and although this enactment was in force for only eighteen months it has some interesting features that require comment.

Between November 1874 and January 1875 five Black Sea steamers laden with grain were lost through cargo shifting, and Lloyd's approached the government to suggest that the carriage of grain in bags might cut down losses of this kind.³ Section 3 of the 1875 Act

1. FRRCUS 1874 ix-xv.

2. 38 & 39 Vic c 88. 'An Act to make further provision for giving further powers to the Board of Trade for stopping unseaworthy Ships'.

3. Correspondence between the Board of Trade and Foreign Office and the Committee of Lloyd's on the subject of Grain Cargoes, BPP 1875 (C.1353) LXVIII 153.

was the response to this approach, and it said that henceforth grain cargoes carried in British-registered ships were to be conveyed in bags, barrels or sacks, or if loaded loose were to be secured with shifting boards. This useful safety measure was kept on the Statute Book in various enactments until codified by ss. 452-456 of the Merchant Shipping Act of 1894, and it undoubtedly saved many lives.¹ Section 5 of the 1875 Act decreed that deck lines were to be painted on the hull showing where each deck was situated, and this served to indicate to observers cases of gross overloading where the inherent buoyancy of a ship was endangered. To the reformers, however, the 1875 Act was a bitter disappointment. Section 6 directed shipowners to paint on the hull a loadline indicating the maximum depth to which it was intended to load a ship for a particular voyage, and the feebleness of this provision led a contemporary of James Hall to observe facetiously that at least the mark would be 'well out of the water under any circumstance of loading',² while one Welsh owner was said to have painted the load-line on the funnel.³ Sections 1 and 2 of the Act merely repeated

1. It would be only proper to add that a contributory cause in this case of losses among Black Sea grain carriers was that they were loaded, and handled, in the same way as the smaller sailing ships that they superseded, and that increasing expertise of ships' officers was a factor in saving life after 1875.

2. Quoted by Roger Finch in his Coals from Newcastle (Lavenham, 1973) 184.

3. Neville Upham, The Load Line - A Hallmark of Safety 30.

the provisions of the 1871 and 1873 Acts which gave inspectors power to board, inspect and detain ships for survey if a quarter of the crew alleged unseaworthiness, but it did not give the power of provisional detention that the reformers desired. Indeed, it went nowhere near their expectations. Earlier, in the debate on his second Merchant Shipping Survey Bill on 24 June 1874, Plimsoll had called for the survey of all unclassified ships on a periodic basis without waiting for allegations of unseaworthiness and had been told by Arthur Peel, eldest son of Sir Robert and a future Speaker of the House of Commons, that 'he could not but think it was a strong thing to ask the House to give a public department the duty of surveying all the ships on the British register'.¹ Another speaker in the debate, Sir Charles Adderley,² said categorically that surveys did not diminish disasters at sea, but as he had voted two years before for the annual mandatory survey of passenger steamers his argument was a weak one.³ Plimsoll's

1. Hansard 3 220 355.

2. Sir Charles Bowyer Adderley (1814-1905), was a Tory landowner who was President of the Board of Trade from 1874 to 1878. He was responsible for the 1875 Act, and was to claim some credit late in life for Plimsoll's Act of 1876.

3. The annual survey of passenger steamers was established by s.8 of the Merchant Shipping and Passenger Acts Amendment Act, 1872 - 35 & 36 Vic c 27. Adderley was evidently an advocate of the Freeside rules laid down many years before by Lloyd's and the Liverpool Underwriters' Association whereby the freeboard of loaded ships was set at about a quarter of the depth of hold.

Bill failed by just three votes in 1874, but in 1876 he was able to push his measure through at the cost of substantial concessions to the shipowning lobby over employers' liability in respect of injury or death aboard ship.

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1876 (known as Plimsoll's Act)¹ was the outcome of thirteen days of bitter debate, a number of divisions and a last-minute attempt by the House of Lords to exclude coasters from its provisions.² It had six significant provisions. By Section 4 it became an unqualified misdemeanour to send an unseaworthy ship to sea - all previous escape clauses being deleted.³ Seaworthiness was implied whenever a seaman signed articles (s.5), and a ship alleged to be unseaworthy could be provisionally detained pending survey under s.6(1). Winter deckloads of timber were again banned; marine casualties were to be investigated by a Wreck Commissioner acting on behalf of the Board of Trade and Section 26 provided for a form of load-line to be painted on the hull. Some of these provisions had not been seriously challenged - for example Chichester Fortescue, President of the Board of Trade until 1874, had envisaged a return of the ban on winter deckloads as far back as June 1873,⁴ but the

1. 39 & 40 Vic c 80.

2. Hansard 3 231 1222.

3. Section 4(3) of the 1875 Act had made it an offence for a master knowingly to take an unseaworthy ship to sea, but proof of guilty knowledge is always difficult to establish in a court of law.

4. Hansard 3 216 515.

imposition of a compulsory and periodic survey was strongly resisted, and the reformers did not achieve their primary aim.

Plimsoll's Act was by no means the final solution to the problems of overloading and unseaworthiness, for it was immediately found that there were practical difficulties in reconciling this type of legislation with the disciplinary restraints on seamen. The affair of the Rock Terrace is a case in point. Briefly, the facts were that all three mates and twenty-two of the crew of the ship made a protest entry in the official log to the effect that she was unseaworthy through being overloaded, and the master countered with allegations of incitement to mutiny, insubordination and combining to impede the working of the ship. The Naval Court at Callao found that although the ship had a list to port (the surveyors found 6' 4" of freeboard on one side and 5' 3" on the other) and that the master had bribed the port captain so that the Peruvian loading mark could be moved up two feet, the Mate was guilty of 'insubordination in extenuating circumstances' and was dismissed the ship. At a second trial of the remaining offenders at the British Consulate at Callao on 11 September 1876 the Third Mate, Cook and two seamen were sent to prison for periods of from eight to twelve weeks. T.H. Farrer declined to intervene when one of the seamen later appealed to the Board of Trade.¹ The rights of merchant seamen

1. Merchant Shipping (Overloading), BPP 1877 (387) LXXIV 339-366.

in respect of overloaded and unsafe ships were still regarded as subordinate to the requirements of discipline. On the credit side, the whole unseaworthiness and overloading debate did give rise to changes of a practical nature. Benjamin Martell, the Chief Surveyor of Lloyd's, was instructed by his Committee to produce tables of freeboard for all types of vessel, and in 1882 the task was complete. Captain Digby Murray of the Board of Trade had been working on similar lines, and in 1882 he produced a revised volume of Approximate Tables of Freeboard for the guidance of shipowners and surveyors. Allegations of unseaworthiness and overloading by seamen slowly decreased as officials took over. In 1873 there were 107 allegations of this type; in 1877 the figure is 105. In 1890 there were only four such allegations, and in 1901-02 there were none.¹ New legislation in the 1890s to bolster the 1876 Act may be held to be partly responsible for the decrease in allegations by seamen, but the prime reason seems to be that officials adopted a more scientific approach and made fewer mistakes. In the period from 1876 to 1912 some 1,348 ships were reported to be undermanned or overloaded; only eight were found to be safe. In the same years 985 ships were reported as having hull, machinery or

1. Returns in respect of unsafe and unseaworthy ships and of crews committed to prison at BPP 1874 LX 313, BPP 1878 LXVII 99, BPP 1890 LXVI 115 and BPP 1902 XCII 255.

equipment defects; eleven were cleared. In the whole period 95% of all allegations originated with officials:¹ given the dramatic fall in allegations by seamen at the end of the period it seems likely that most of their protests were registered in the early years when inspection and survey had not been perfected.

The issue of safety at sea may not have been completely resolved by 1883, but an almost complete success may be recorded in the curbing of two of the three main types of crimping² activity in Britain in this period. Homeward-bound crimping - which provided the most profit - almost ceased to exist, while the activities of 'advertising' or

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1. Return of Unsafe Ships, BPP 1912-13 (Cd.6371) LXXXVI 9.
 2. Crimping is a phenomenon much described, but rarely dealt with analytically. Sir Harry Calcraft, the Permanent Secretary at the Board of Trade in the 1890s, defined crimping as 'a system whereby certain boarding house keepers, if unchecked, take advantage of the weakness of seamen, and the peculiar circumstances of their lives, to obtain complete control of their liberty of action, and practically control the supply'. Fifth and Final Report of the Royal Commission on Labour, BPP 1894 (C.7421) XXXV 117. (Referred to hereafter as FFRCL 1894). Peter Kemp describes a crimp as 'one who makes it his business to persuade seamen to desert from a ship in order to sell them to another or deliver them up to the press gang on payment of head money'. The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea (1976) 213. Neither definition seems wide enough, and a suggested comprehensive definition follows. 'A crimp is an informal labour contractor who employs guile, force or fraud to gain physical or financial control over a seaman. His profit comes from the seaman's past or future earnings, or from the employers of sea labour when a seaman is delivered to a ship. Crimping is the technique whereby physical or financial control is achieved'.

'outfitting' crimps were checked by firm executive action. Outward-bound crimping at home, and all varieties of crimping abroad, vanished more slowly. The initiative for making an impact on homeward-bound crimping in Britain came from Superintendent H. Evans of the Thames Division of the Metropolitan Police who submitted a report on crimping in the Port of London on 13 May 1867.¹ He noted that 'Thieves, Bullies, Pugilists and others of the very lowest grade' - known colloquially as 'Hammock Snatchers' - boarded ships at Gravesend with bottles of spirits in their pockets and induced seamen to lodge with their principals on arrival. These 'runners' received from eight to ten shillings for each man from boarding-house proprietors, and Superintendent Evans went on to suggest that men be stationed at Gravesend, and at the dock gates in London where the 'runners' had carts to convey sailors' baggage, to check the traffic. The Police Commissioner agreed, and Thames Division policemen began to board ships in the Lower Hope² to stop the runners climbing aboard and plying the seamen with drink preparatory to taking them off to the crimps' boarding-house. When Inspector Clarke reported in the following year it was to say that 506 ships had been protected in this way in the first year of the scheme.³

1. Crimping in the Port of London, PRO MT/9 42 M.4392/1868.

2. The reach below Gravesend.

3. PRO MT/9 42 M.6635/1868.

The provision of physical protection for seamen from crimps at the end of a voyage was half the answer to the problem of homeward-bound crimping: the other half of it was to be the protection of their earnings. The Thames Police scheme had continuing success, and in 1875 a small steamer called Midge staffed by two inspectors and six constables was solely employed on this duty. The Midge chased away crimps trying to get out to ships in mid-stream, put seamen on board outward-bound ships and escorted men ashore after pay-off. In 1878 Board of Trade personnel took over Midge and there evolved the Transmission of Wages, or Midge, Scheme.¹ Officials would board incoming vessels and ask the crew if they wanted to have their pay forwarded to the Mercantile Marine Office nearest their home. If the seaman agreed, he would receive a small sum, usually a sovereign, and a railway warrant, collecting the rest of his pay when he reached home. The Transmission of Wages Scheme spread to Liverpool, Glasgow, Newcastle and Hull in 1879, and was operating at most United Kingdom ports by 1883. Crimping suffered a severe body-blow. What had happened was that the crimp was deprived of about half his income, for in economic terms the seaman

1. See S.S. 'Midge', BPP 1878 (220) LXVII 139, River Thames (Board of Trade Staff), BPP 1878-79 (220) LVIII 569, and the evidence of Captain Robert Pitman reproduced in the 1878 Report from the Select Committee on the Merchant Seamen Bill, BPP 1878 (205) XVI QQ.4435-4446 (referred to hereafter as RSCMSB 1878).

represented a dual product with one lot of profits made helping the newly-landed man spend his wages on drink, women, shoddy clothing and gambling; then the second cut coming from discounting his advance note for the next voyage and collecting 'head money' or 'blood money' from the master or agent when the seaman was shipped out. Where a man came ashore with only a sovereign or so in his pocket it was not worth while keeping him in food, drink and creature comforts of a rough kind until he could be 'sold' to a new ship.

The Merchant Shipping (Payment of Wages and Rating) Act of 1880¹ further diminished the power of the crimps. Section 2 made conditional advance notes illegal,² and s.3 allowed a seaman to allot up to half of his wages to his family when signing-on. The period of waiting for full settlement of wages was reduced to two clear days,³ and the penalties for crimps' runners were increased. By s.5 they could now be sent to prison for up to six months for boarding a ship before the seamen had left it. Prior to the abolition of conditional advance notes, crimps and their associates had a vested interest in seeing that their 'customers' got to sea, and Frank Bullen has

1. 43 & 44 Vic c 16.

2. A conditional advance note was a printed form which promised to pay the bearer a certain sum, but only after a period of time - usually three days - subsequent to a named sailor sailing in a named ship.

3. The time originally stipulated in the 1819 Act.

penned a vivid description of joining his first ship in the 1870s where the crew of the Arabella:

hove in sight, convoyed by a motley crowd of tailor's runners, boarding masters and frowsy-looking women. They made a funny little group. The sailors were in the happy state where nothing matters - least of all the discount of an advance note; hence the bodyguard of interested watchers who would leave no stone unturned to see that their debtors went in the ship¹

Advance notes were also believed to be the cause of 90% of desertions in the 1870s,² for while earlier in the century most men deserted to get higher wages, at the end of it most men left ships (or failed to join them) because they did not like the prospect of working three months to pay off an advance that might have all gone on one night's debauch. A man who signed-on and cashed his advance note had a very good chance of escaping detection if he subsequently failed to join a ship,³ and multiple offences were not uncommon. In 1860, Conrad Greenhow, the Board of Trade superintendent at North Shields, reported the case of a man who signed for five ships in eight days and got an advance in each case.⁴ With risks of this kind attached to them it followed that advance notes were

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1. Frank T. Bullen, The Log of a Sea Waif (1910) 6-7.
 2. Evidence of Colonel Edward Stock Hill. President of the Cardiff Chamber of Commerce, to the Royal Commission on Unseaworthy Ships. PRRCUS 1873 QQ. 8278-8285.
 3. At Cardiff in 1872 only 10% of fail-to-join seamen who had cashed their advance notes subsequently appeared before a Court - see PRRCUS 1873 QQ.1447-1454.
 4. RSCMS 1860 Q.4221.

heavily discounted by those dealing in them. In 1850 Labouchère had put the discount rate at 50%:¹ in the 1870s Frank Bullen thought it was 40%.² Whatever figure is accepted the result was, as one newspaper put it, that 'the sailor is fleeced to the skin by those who cash the notes',³ and that as the crimps and their agents were generally the only persons willing to take these notes 'the sailors are simply the slaves of the crimps'.⁴ Thomas Gray took the view that if 'no Advance Note could be obtained (by the crimp) his hold on the sailor would relax',⁵ and it was repeated by the Royal Commission on Unseaworthy Ships.⁶ Abolition of the advance note was seen as somewhat of a panacea by the Local Marine Boards when they were canvassed in 1870,⁷ although there were warning voices. Liverpool thought it would be impractical; Dublin that an advance note was a necessity when a man had to get an outfit of clothes together for a long voyage. The Superintendent of the Cardiff Sailor's Home wrote in to make the same point,

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1. Hansard 3 108 676.
 2. Frank T. Bullen, The Log of a Sea Waif 5.
 3. Western Mail, 13 January 1871.
 4. President of the Cardiff Chamber of Commerce - PRRCUS 1873 Q.8278.
 5. PRO MT/9 73 M.517/1871.
 6. FRRCUS 1874 xv.
 7. PRO MT/9 73 M.6681/1870.

and an anonymous master at Plymouth said that advances were essential where a sailor had run out of funds when travelling from port to port to find work.¹ The issue hung fire for some years, but such was the reforming zeal of the new Liberal ministry in 1880 that the Act which abolished advance notes went through at a sitting. As will be shown later, within a few years the Liberals were to find the Liverpool argument persuasive and bring back the conditional advance note on the grounds of expediency.

The protection given to British seamen in United Kingdom ports by the 1880 Act was soon extended to some classes of foreign seamen. Orders in Council made under s.6 of that Act gave similar protection from the attentions of crimps to Italian, Swedish and Norwegian sailors in 1881, to Germans in 1882 and to Americans in 1883.² Crimps then countered by using the new device of a 'bonus' note and nominal wages of a shilling a month to get round the Act but, except in a few special cases, skilled men tended to avoid

1. PRO MT/9 73 M.1113/1871.

2. See the London Gazette for 4 March 1881, 28 October 1881, 5 December 1881 and 29 May 1883.

this type of contract through its unfamiliarity.¹

Crimps were reduced to handling an inferior product - tramps, runaways, the feeble-minded, foreigners who did not understand the language and old or diseased seamen who resorted to the crimp voluntarily to get any kind of berth. Almost invariably destitute, these men and boys provided little profit, and Thomas Gray was able to report in 1886 that 'the low public houses and other dens which abound in the neighbourhood of the docks ... have greatly decreased, probably one half of them are closed altogether ...'. At the same time the Superintendents of the twenty-nine principal Mercantile Marine Offices in the United Kingdom gave a collective opinion that crimping had become a relatively minor problem.² Firm action by the Board

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1. The device of shilling-a-month nominal wages was used by masters in the 1850s when many crewmen were would-be immigrants expected to desert on arrival in Australia or California. It was, and is, employed where men work on a share basis in fishing or whaling or in salvage work. When, in 1871, the Board of Trade enquired into the crewing of the Liverpool steamer Cruizer which sailed with fourteen shilling-a-month men aboard it was suspected that crimps had been at work, but it transpired that the voyage was a salvage and towing venture with rewards contingent on the degree of success - see PRO MT/9 58 M.2058/1871. Cattlemen, passage workers, supernumeraries, relatives, invalids and surgeons seeking experience were often signed-on at a shilling a month, as were passengers carried in ships not otherwise permitted to carry them.
 2. Report on the Supply of British Seamen - a departmental report prepared for the Royal Commission on the Loss of Life at Sea - BPP 1886 (C.4709) LIX 197 and Appendix H.

of Trade had curbed the activities of the 'advertising' or 'outfitting' crimps in the early 1870s. These gentry advertised in national daily papers for 'mid-shipmen' or 'apprentices', and made their profits from clothing supplied and premiums exacted from parents. The victims of 'advertising' or 'outfitting' crimps were conducted aboard ship at dead of night, finding in the morning that they had contracted to serve a term of years at little or no wages in a collier or tramp rather than the full-rigged, crack ocean carrier mentioned in the advertisement. Following a number of prosecutions, and subsequent convictions, the Board of Trade inserted warning notices in the newspapers concerned, and the practice slowly died out.¹ As crimping decreased overall, the behaviour patterns of seamen changed. Despite R.H. Thornton's blanket condemnation of latter-day seamen as 'casual and shiftless',² and the continuing view that seafaring was a residual occupation,³ there are signs that the era of

1. See The Times 12 May 1871, PRO MT/9 63 M.11380/1871 and PRO MT/9 62 M.7922/1871.

2. Thornton, British Shipping 226.

3. William Lamport, the Liverpool shipping magnate, told the 1860 Select Committee on Merchant Shipping that 'I never knew a sailor 30 years of age who was not anxious to leave the sea if he could find anything to do on shore' - RSCMS 1860 Q.2585. A 1973 study of seafarers reports that 'In all cases men rarely stay at sea when other shore-based methods of obtaining economic rewards are available'. Peter H. Fricke (ed.) Seafarer and Community (Towata, New Jersey, 1973) 4.

ignorant, rum-soaked illiterates was over. The better class of seaman - notably those employed in the liner trades and on ships with regular ports of call - now allotted a portion of his pay to his family, sent the balance home under the Transmission of Wages Scheme and left the dock area by cab for the nearest railway station after pay-off. As the late David Alexander put it, sailors were now simply working men who got wet.¹

In the years between 1875 and 1880 the legislators began to look at merchant seamen in a new light. Partly, this was due to the fact that free trade - the obvious creed for the earliest industrialized nation - had to be based on a strong merchant fleet, and partly because it seemed inequitable that seamen be denied the benefits conferred on shore workers by the Employers and Workmen Act of 1875. Imprisonment for breach of contract seemed indefensible when applied to one group of workers but not another. Sir Charles Adderley, President of the Board of Trade between 1874 and 1878, played a dominant role in the Select Committee on the Merchant Seamen Bill in 1878 and ventilated the whole complex problem of contractual obligations during its deliberations. Samuel Plimsoll was on the Committee

1. The concluding sentence from David Alexander's paper, 'Literacy among Canadian and Foreign Seamen, 1863-1899' read posthumously at the Maritime History Group conference at Memorial University, Newfoundland in July 1980. The phrase was subsequently used as the title of the conference paper. See Rosemary Ommer and Gerald Panting (eds), Working Men Who Got Wet, (St. John's, Newfoundland, 1980).

and made some telling points, bringing out in particular the absurdity of a situation whereby engineers and senior officers of a ship could be arrested without warrant by ship's husbands or consignees of cargo if suspected of desertion.¹ Colby Atkinson Davis, a former Customs officer turned seaman's representative, testified that in his experience most failures to join a ship were accidental; that at Hull all legal process leading to imprisonment for failing to join was initiated by two crimps and that the law forced men to sail in unsafe ships. Although Davis does not bear the best of reputations,² his evidence is full and informative. To the key question - 'Do you find, then, that the threat of imprisonment does operate upon seamen to make them go to sea in unsafe and unseaworthy ships?' he replied

It does, because it throws them into debt as well. They have had their notes cashed, and if they do not go to sea in those vessels then they have that money to refund, and it distresses their wives and families considerably, in the case of those that are married men, by reason of their having to repay the loss as well as undergo the imprisonment.³

In the event, although it had been envisaged that the maximum term of imprisonment for failing to join a ship after contracting to do so be reduced and that

1. RSCMSB 1878 99.

2. He had been dismissed from his post as Surveyor of Customs for theft.

3. RSCMSB 1878 QQ.142-170 and Q.211.

legal process be not employed until a man had actually joined his ship, the Select Committee did not endorse clause six of the projected Bill which would have reduced the maximum term of imprisonment from twelve weeks to six weeks, nor interfere with the existing process of law.¹

The new Liberal government of 1880 saw Joseph Chamberlain,² the great Liberal Unionist statesman, as President of the Board of Trade, and from his first days in office he was receptive to the idea of abolishing imprisonment for breach of contract.³ However, the 1880 government lacked a clear majority and when on 16 June 1880 the Employer and Workmen Act 1875 (Extension to Seamen) Bill was introduced by a follower of Plimsoll he bowed to the wishes of the shipowners and declared that seamen were a special case and that an element of compulsion could not be done away with. He promised to introduce a Bill dealing with the whole question of contract and discipline in the merchant service in the next session,⁴ but four years passed before he introduced,

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1. This Select Committee's findings did, of course, lead to the passing of the 1880 Merchant Shipping (Payment of Wages and Rating) Act referred to earlier in this chapter.
 2. Joseph Chamberlain (1836-1914), Mayor of Birmingham 1873-76 and MP for that city between 1876 and 1914. He is chiefly remembered for his involvement in schemes for imperial and colonial preference, tariff reform and the Workmen's Compensation Act.
 3. For example, on 27 May 1880 he said in the House that he hoped to bring in a measure abolishing imprisonment for breach of contract 'in the next session'. Hansard 3 252 530.
 4. Hansard 3 253 157-159.

somewhat hesitantly, a Bill with the limited objective of amending s.2 of the 1880 Act. This would have merely had the effect of legalizing the conditional advance note once more provided such notes were for only a month's wages, but the measure did not reach the statute book. The basic contractual position of seamen did not change,¹ and there seems to have been a general evaporation of initial goodwill, while Chamberlain in particular turned away from seamen's problems and did not take up the cudgels again until the 1890s. It was mainly a matter of timing. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 had produced a minor boom in shipping,² and an euphoric posture had been adopted by the Liberals. An optimistic view could still be taken in the late 1870s, but freight rates were already on a slippery slope that only flattened out in 1896 when they were down by half from the 'high' of 1869.³ As so often in human affairs, principles lose their clarity of outline in hard times.

The general overview in 1883, therefore, is

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1. For a fuller examination of the history of the seamen's contract with his employer see Conrad Dixon 'Signing-On', The Mariner's Mirror Vol. 67, No.3 (1981).
 2. It involved only steamships because north-north-westerly winds predominate in the northern part of the Red Sea, and are contrary for UK-bound sailing ships. There is little room for tacking in the Gulf of Suez when the prevailing wind is blowing. See the Hydrographic Department's Ocean Passages for the World (Taunton, 1973) 68.
 3. H.J. Dyos and D.H. Aldcroft, British Transport (1969) 287.

that the merchant seaman was safer, healthier, slightly better housed and fed and much less subject to harassment by crimps than was the case in 1867. Other minor reforms must be noted. In 1872 the employment arrangements for Home Trade seamen were put on a long-term basis,¹ and colour-blindness tests for deck officers were introduced in 1877.² There was official awareness that seamen were poorly paid, and comparisons were made that revealed that while seamen and firemen were victualled and accommodated when aboard ship their wages tended to be between a half and two-thirds of those paid in comparable shore occupations.³ Thomas Gray and R.G.C. Hamilton, the

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1. Section 16 of the 1872 Act permitted Home Trade seamen to enter into time agreements of more than six months' duration, and annual contracts of employment became common.
 2. Red and green sidelights had been introduced in 1862, and colour-blindness had become a contributory factor in collisions. Merchant Seamen (Certificates: Colour Blindness), BPP 1878-79 (340) LXIV 170.
 3. The Supply of British Seamen, BPP 1873 (C.752) LIX 232. Wages at Liverpool in 1872 were as follows. Dockers and riggers got 5/- a day, painters 6/-, stevedores and carpenters 7/-. Seamen serving in steamships received, on average, 2/1½d a day, and in sailing ships 1/11½d a day. Victualling was nominally worth 1/- a day, so that seamen were consistently less well paid than their counterparts in shore employment. A glance at Appendix Fifteen (A) shows that the 1872 mean monthly wages of a sailing ship seaman were £3-5-0 and in steamers £3-15-0. The Liverpool men receiving £2-18-9 and £3-3-9 respectively were not only below the mean but very much worse off than men in other trades. Appendix Fifteen (B) shows that in 1872 a seaman in the China trade was receiving £4-0-0 a month, and in the Quebec trade £3-10-0 a month. The men in the Atlantic trade receiving £4-10-0 a month were the only ones above the national average figure among the Liverpool men.

Assistant Secretary at the Board of Trade, had determined this statistic while reporting on the labour supply position as they saw it in 1872. The primary concern of shipowners was that there should be no manning restrictions and no governmental regulation in respect of apprentices or the employment of foreign seamen. The task of the state was to provide men, without further taxation, in accordance with the laws of supply and demand. Gray and his collaborator saw no reason for any government intervention, but urged that medical inspection should be more thorough.¹ They expressed concern over the physique and health of serving seamen, and the same concern led the Board of Trade to send an official to inspect hospitals for British seamen abroad.² It was found that tax-supported hospitals at Smyrna and Constantinople were generally satisfactory, while voluntary financing was working reasonably well at Buenos Ayres, Kronstadt, Callao and Valparaiso. The voluntary system had quite failed at Pernambuco and Monte Video,³ and the recommendation was

1. BPP 1873 LIX 227.

2. He was William Cosmo Monkhouse (1840-1901), who was also a poet and art critic and who wrote two definitive books on The Italian Pre-Raphaelites (1887) and British Contemporary Artists (1899).

3. Merchant Shipping (Hospitals in Foreign Ports), BPP 1877 (348) LXXIV 91-133 and Papers relating to Hospitals for British Seamen in Foreign Ports, BPP 1878-79 (149) LXIV 98-116. At the Pernambuco Hospital a stabbed seaman was placed on a mattress from which a dead smallpox victim had been removed half an hour earlier, while Monte Video Hospital was financially unsound.

that all such institutions be maintained by taxes. At home, the infirmary building of Greenwich Hospital was made available as the nucleus of a land-based hospital for merchant seamen in 1870 when Dreadnought was closed,¹ and in 1877 the Dreadnought School for Nurses was established nearby as a direct result of the tireless lobbying of Florence Nightingale.²

The administrative response of Board of Trade officials to the just grievances of seamen in this period tended to be skewed in that a firm distinction was drawn between deck and boiler-room personnel. There was a sustained effort to improve the status of Able Seamen,³ which culminated in the s.7 provision of 1880 that a man had to serve four years before the mast before he could be so rated.⁴ An 'intelligent,

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1. This concession was made because the Seamen's Hospital Society had applied for a grant of public money in 1865 to compensate for lost revenue from the fees charged for replacement Register Tickets, and the Admiralty was persuaded to make the infirmary building available. PRO MT/9 19 M.1468/1865.
 2. May and Baker Pharmaceutical Bulletin Vol. 20, No. 1 January/February 1971, 4.
 3. The original initiative had come from a group of ship-owners who, in 1877, placed before the Board of Trade a scheme for examinations for ABs. A pilot scheme was launched in June 1878, but after three years when only twenty-three men had passed the examinations the plan was abandoned. See the Peter Parkhurst type-script 'Ships of Peace' - NMM PKT 8/1 181.
 4. This clause was popular with the Board, the industry and the seamen. Some reformers wanted to go further, and in 1875 Bedford Pim, a retired naval officer who was MP for Gravesend between 1874 and 1880, chaired a meeting of the London Seamen's Nautical Protection Society which called for examinations for ABs. The shipowners took up the idea - see Footnote 3 above, and PRO MT/9 M.1373/1875.

industrious and sober AB'¹ could go to navigation school and qualify as a deck officer, but no such avenue was available to the stoker or trimmer because engineer officers were recruited from men who had served a shore apprenticeship. Consequently, although the wages were better in the boiler-room² the work attracted men of lower calibre, as information from outside sources indicated. A letter from Massey and Sawyer, Hull shipowners, to the Board of Trade in 1879 said bluntly,

firemen and stokers are of the lowest class of society, without a settled abode, or ties of any description and their chief object in life appears to be, when they have money, to get drunk and make as much disturbance as possible.³

When John Paterson, the Surgeon Superintendent at Constantinople, produced his annual report for 1878 which said 'from a hygienic point of view the Mercantile Marine in this part of the world can only be considered as a large disease-producing establishment' a master mariner, Richard Kay, felt compelled to point out that stokers were not seamen in the proper sense of the word and that the men employed in the engine-rooms of Black Sea steamers tended to be 'shore labourers of the lowest class, gas-stokers broken down, iron-workers, puddlers and the like ...'.⁴ These men clearly had

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1. Villiers, Voyaging with the Wind 10.
 2. See Appendix Fifteen (A).
 3. BPP 1878-79 LXIV 119.
 4. BPP 1878-79 LXIV 108 and 116.

little in common with the deck seamen described so well by writers with personal knowledge of the type, such as Joseph Conrad.¹ In 1880 the spokesman for the North of England Steam Shipowners Association believed that the mixing of deck seamen with the less-disciplined firemen in steamers led to deterioration in the former,² while the Registrar-General of Seamen had said seven years before that the supplanting of sail by steam meant that an Able Seaman's rating was too easily obtained.³ The status and responsibilities of Able Seamen were to be a matter of continuing debate - particularly as union power grew - but engine-room and boiler-room ratings attracted no such attention. Like lascars, they had no opportunity of a break-through

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1. Joseph Conrad (Josef Conrad Korzeniowski), the Polish-born writer, had a great deal of personal contact with seamen, and had risen to command from fo'c's'le beginnings. He was a deckhand in the Mavis, a Constantinople coal-trader, and served in the coaster Skimmer of the Sea in 1878. In 1879 he signed-on as an Ordinary Seaman in the sailing ship Duke of Sutherland and made the round voyage to Australia and back, and was an AB in the collier Europa in 1880. For his career before the mast see Jocelyn Baines, Joseph Conrad (1960) 58 and his evidence to the 1896 Manning Committee contained in the Report of the Committee appointed by the Board of Trade to enquire into the Manning of British Merchant Ships, BPP 1896 (C.8128) XL Q.6276. (Report referred to hereafter as Manning Committee Report, 1896).
 2. Report of the Select Committee on Merchant Shipping, BPP 1880 (305-Sess.2) XI QQ.4179-4198 and QQ.4325-4328. (Report referred to hereafter as RSCMS 1880).
 3. PRRCUS 1873 Q.10,017.

to officer rank in the nineteenth-century.¹

In this chapter the interaction described has been between philanthropists and reformers, officials and politicians, with the seamen themselves speaking mainly through intermediaries or forwarding petitions to a benevolent government. The view of the seafarer as childlike and needing the protection of the state is just beginning to fade,² but there is stern resistance to granting him any kind of parity with workers ashore. The Factory Act of 1874 had instituted the fifty-six and a half hour week - but not for seamen. Uniquely among British workers, the seaman could still be imprisoned for breach of contract. There was no statutory food scale, and the Employers Liability Act of 1880 had no effect aboard ships at sea. A lag in work-related legislation is apparent, and with the rise of a viable national union the stage is set for a head-on confrontation between master and man.

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1. Normally, an engine-room or boiler-room rating could rise no higher than Storeman or Donkeyman, and a lascar to Serang or Tindal - See Appendix Twelve. However, an avenue of promotion to Refrigerating Engineer - for which no formal qualifications were needed - opened up as the carcass trade from Australia and New Zealand developed.
 2. It faded slowly: an 1860 view. 'Jack does not think, and often does not know where he is going till he gets aboard a ship'. James Beazley, a Liverpool shipowner, RSCMS 1860 Q.2244.

CHAPTER SIX

TWO DECADES OF CONFLICT

In the mid-1880s the contrast between the working conditions of men employed ashore and those employed afloat was such as to reveal to any thoughtful observer the grossly disadvantaged position of the latter group. There were no restrictions on the hours worked by seamen so that the eighty-four-hour week was a commonplace,¹ and there was no overtime unless a specific amendment had been made to the engagement form providing for overtime payments.² There were no standard rates of pay, no proper scheme of workmen's compensation³ and, in general, no continuity of employment.⁴

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1. The four-hours-on and four-hours off watch system, with two two-hourly dog-watches daily, amounted to an eighty-four-hour week at sea. Many masters also compelled the hands to clear out the holds for new cargo during their afternoon watch below, and chief engineers held regular 'field days' during which watches were ignored while general maintenance took place.
 2. The case of Harrison v. Dodd (1914) III L.T. 47 confirmed that overtime was not payable unless some special arrangement had been made.
 3. Seamen had been specifically excluded from the operation of the Employers and Workmen Act of 1875, and when s.11 of the 1880 Act removed the exclusion clause for seamen and apprentices no provision was made for enforcement. Consequently, there was no proper compensation scheme until s.7 of the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1906 (6 Edw VII c 58) made provision for compensation in respect of personal injury by accident arising out of and in the course of employment' and s.11 provided that a ship could be detained until it was paid.
 4. The exceptions were the large liner companies, and coasters where annual agreements had been permissible since 1872.

The discipline code imposed by the 1854 Act was so drawn that industrial action could be readily stigmatized as mutiny, and the contractual obligation entered into when articles were signed meant that leaving one ship for another where wages were higher was classed as a criminal offence and punished accordingly.¹ On shore, the widening of the franchise, the nine-hour day and the legalization of trades unions were accomplished facts: it had to follow that seamen would seek an improvement in their lot and that the establishment of a national union would be part of that struggle.

It was shown in Chapter Two that early seamen's unions were local in character and limited in aim, and in the period immediately preceding the creation of a national representative body the same weaknesses may be observed. Many attempts to organise or to wring concessions from the employers were made in the 1870s and early 1880s, but failure was the inevitable result. For example, the Port of London seamen held a mass meeting in the East End on 3 May 1872 to press for higher wages, but although thousands were present, and the theme of solidarity was urged by a number of speakers,

1. For example, a seaman from the British ship Golden Age who joined a colonial vessel at Quebec to boost his monthly wages from £3-10-0 to £13-0-0 was recognised as a deserter on his return to England and was sentenced to the maximum term of twelve weeks' imprisonment at Thames Police Court. BPP 1873 LIX 259.

no lasting organisation emerged.¹ In the same year, the Southampton men employed by the Royal Mail Line and P & O struck for parity of wages and 500 of them formed a union under a seaman, E.G. Fairchild. It was a short-lived strike, and the union perished when it collapsed.² Fairchild turned up at Liverpool in 1879 and was one of the founders of the Liverpool Seamen's and Firemen's Bowl Union³ which combined with the Amalgamated British Seamen's Protection Society⁴ to fight a wage claim. The strike failed and the union ceased to exist shortly afterwards.⁵ Unions of the ad hoc variety evidently could not survive strike failure, whereas those with a friendly society function, and the funds that went with it, had a better chance. The Hull Marine Firemen's Mutual Association with some 450 members was in the latter category, and it survived the failure of the 1881 strike:⁶ the North of England Sailors' and

1. The Eastern Post, 5 May 1872.

2. A. Temple Patterson, A History of Southampton, 1700-1914 (Southampton, 1975) 81-84.

3. Named from a charity bowl outside the restaurant owned by a co-founder of the union, William Simpson.

4. A dubious 'union' in that it was dominated by boarding-house keepers and later had a strike-breaking role. Its founder, William Paterson Lind, was an advocate of 'free labour'.

5. E.L. Taplin, Liverpool Dockers and Seamen, 1870-1890 (University of Hull Occasional Paper in Economic and Social History No. 6, 1974) 61.

6. Raymond Brown, Waterfront Organisation in Hull, 1870-1900 (University of Hull Occasional Paper in Economic and Social History No. 5, 1972) 36.

Sea-going Firemen's Friendly Association, established at Sunderland in 1879, never fought a strike, yet it served as the seed-bed for a national union and as a vehicle for the most significant personality in the history of trade unionism among seafarers - J. Havelock Wilson.

Wilson was a Sunderland man with extensive experience at sea, and his aims were simple. He wanted four things: union recognition, the settlement of disputes through collective bargaining, better accommodation for seamen and an improved scale of provisions.¹ He had observed that earlier struggles with shipowners had generally failed because union infrastructure was inadequate and demands were centred merely on wages, and concentrated his efforts on building an organisation with national, and later international, linkage. In 1887 he had come to realise that the North of England Sailors' and Sea-going Firemen's Friendly Society would never break out of its parochial mould and formed the National Amalgamated Sailors' and Firemen's Union of Great Britain and Ireland, which for the sake of brevity will be referred to hereafter as the Sailors' and Firemen's Union. In the following year his national union had 500 members and was affiliated to the Trades Union Congress: in 1889 it had 65,000 members and almost

1. This summary of aims taken from Walter Runciman's introduction to J. Havelock Wilson's autobiography My Stormy Voyage Through Life (1925). It had been intended to be a longer work, but only one volume was published.

sixty branches.¹ From the beginning, Wilson took the view that conditions for British seamen were depressed because foreign seamen and lascars had free entry to the industry,² and campaigned for certificates for seamen and firemen and extension of the Employers Liability Act to seafarers.³ He was reluctant to be drawn into any kind of dispute while his fledgling organisation was still growing,⁴ but in 1889 the pressure of events compelled the Sailors' and Firemen's Union to lend its support to the Liverpool men who had struck for a pay rise of a pound on monthly earnings and launched an on-off dispute that took up the first half of the year.

Wilson's unwilling participation in the 1889 dispute served to confirm his earlier view that organisation must precede action, and when he returned to Liverpool after the strike had collapsed he was able to sketch out the future forcibly to a mass meeting. 'The aim of all concerned', he declared, 'will be to build up a strong and firm union upon the solid foundations

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1. The Story of the Seamen - a National Union of Seamen pamphlet published in 1964, 7-8.
 2. Wilson, My Stormy Voyage Through Life 98. The union rules provided for differential dues for foreigners, so that a foreigner with no sea time had to pay £20 for membership.
 3. He gave evidence to the 1887 Royal Commission on the Loss of Life at Sea to this effect. Final Report of the Royal Commission on Loss of Life at Sea, BPP 1887 (C.5227) XLIII QQ.18,745-18,934. (Referred to hereafter as FRRCLLS 1887.)
 4. Taplin, Liverpool Dockers and Seamen 82, and Wilson, My Stormy Journey Through Life 140-147.

which have already been made'.¹ The 1889 strike had highlighted the basic flaw in workers' organisations in the period, which was that there was no general tradition of class solidarity or awareness of politico-economic principles despite E.L. Taplin's doctrinaire (1974) view that 'employees were ... increasingly disillusioned by the growing inadequacies of Victorian capitalism'.² The 1889 strike was easily broken by the employers because they had no difficulty in getting imported labour from elsewhere. Wilson himself reports that 'fishermen from Yarmouth were imported in hundreds to act as deck hands',³ and seamen were brought in from as far away as South Devon to crew the mail boats.⁴ The final phase of the Liverpool strike, and that at Leith, lasted a mere six weeks, and the principal result was that the owners proceeded to create a permanent strike-breaking organisation that was to employ virtually the same tactics of introducing labour from unaffected areas in all the battles between the union and employers

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1. Liverpool Mercury, 23 July 1889.
 2. Taplin, Liverpool Dockers and Seamen 86.
 3. Wilson, My Stormy Voyage Through Life 140.
 4. There was some resistance from local men. A party of Teignmouth seamen returned home 'in their working clothes and with their faces blackened; they said that the unionists had played practical jokes on them, purloining their money and throwing their clothes overboard'. Devon Weekly Times, 12 and 19 July 1889.

from 1890 to 1926.

Many early employers' organisation had sprung from common insurance needs, and with the growth of the shipping industry some had avowed short-term political aims.¹ However, a permanent employers' organisation was not envisaged until the Sailors' and Firemen's Union was seen to be a serious threat to the interests of shipowners, for in 1890 the Shipping Federation was created simply because it came to be believed, on rather slim evidence, that the union intended to enforce a closed shop.² The Shipping Federation initiated a four-pronged campaign against unionisation. First, it issued Federation 'tickets'. These documents were in parchment form, and nominally entitled the holder to industrial injury benefit from the Federation Benefit Fund although their real purpose was to enable masters and mates engaging crew to distinguish between union and non-union labour.³ Second,

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1. For example, the General Shipowners Society of the 1830s and the Central Association of Shipowners set up in 1885 to influence the 1886 Royal Commission on Loss of Life at Sea.
 2. The background to the formation of the Shipping Federation is given in L.H. Powell's The Shipping Federation (1950) 3. As the story is revealed there, it seems most likely that the Federation was created by a panic response to an unconfirmed rumour. A conversation aboard a Tyne ferry between an official of an insurance association and the solicitor acting for the Sailors' and Firemen's Union was the basis of the rumour that masters and seamen would be compelled to join the union.
 3. A Federation 'ticket' cost the seaman a shilling and could be renewed annually for sixpence. The rules on the back stated that the holder was entitled 'to employment - at the recognised wages of the port ... with any shipmaster or owner affiliated to the Shipping Federation Ltd.'

the employers' organisation opened offices at all the major seaports where holders of Federation 'tickets' could be engaged.¹ Third, it maintained a small fleet of depot ships with the dual function of housing 'free labour' and transporting it to where it would be needed. Finally, the Shipping Federation served as a clearing-house for information and became the national representative body for the great majority of shipowners.² Seamen soon realised that the safest course was to hold both union and Federation membership cards, particularly after 23 February 1891 when the Shipping Federation made the production of one of their 'tickets' an absolute prerequisite for sea employment in ships owned by their members. However, there was strong initial resistance to compulsion in respect of holding Federation 'tickets', and in 1890 there were strikes at the ports of London, Liverpool, North and South Shields, Newcastle, Leith, Aberdeen, Hull, Glasgow, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Cardiff and Swansea. A description of what happened at London, Hull and Cardiff will serve to illustrate the trend of events.³

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1. This was necessary because of intimidation at Mercantile Marine Offices. The master of the steamer Trinidad said that at Newport, Monmouthshire, 'it was highly dangerous for a free seaman to enter the shipping offices of that port owing to the continual presence of a rowdy element of unionists'. FFRCL 1894 439.
 2. 81% of owners joined within a month of its foundation. Powell, The Shipping Federation 5.
 3. Unless otherwise stated, the version that follows is taken from FFRCL 1894 435-451.

In September 1890 the Sailors' and Firemen's Union came into conflict with the British India line based at the Albert Docks in London through a demarcation dispute with the Hammermen's Union. Seamen pickets at Mercantile Marine offices refused to let anyone enter to sign-on unless he could produce a union card, and as the dispute widened the employers began to recruit 'free labour' - mostly seamen, fishermen and agricultural workers from Kent. The depot ship Scotland housed these men, who were signed-on afloat to avoid confrontation with strikers, and it was attacked by seamen who pelted the occupants with household refuse. At various times the coal porters, ship-repair workers, stevedores and dockers came out in support of the seamen, but the stoppage was never complete and the supply of 'free labour' was not cut. In February 1891 the strike fizzled out - chiefly because the stevedores, who were aristocrats of labour in terms of wages received, found that unskilled men could soon master their jobs. The Hull strike arose when the steamer Mary Anning berthed with an all-union crew and the master discharged them because he had orders to ship an all-Federation crew. Dockers refused to discharge the ship, and when the Shipping Federation sent men from Liverpool to unload into lighters the lightermen refused to handle the cargo either. A smouldering strike went on for six months, and the Royal Commission on Labour version of events at Hull is worth reproducing in full to illustrate the line taken by the Shipping Federation on that occasion.

Representatives of the Seamen's Union called on the committee of the Shipping Federation and asked that the union crew (of the Mary Anning) might be taken back, but the reply was that they would ship whom they liked. This was the beginning of a number of strikes which went on for about six months, and it is stated that the blame in the majority of cases lay with the local officials of the Shipping Federation, and that preference of employment was frequently given to incompetent Federation men over competent unionists.

The stiff attitude of the Shipping Federation on this occasion goes a long way towards explaining why the subsequent 1893 dispute at Hull was so virulent.¹ The Cardiff strike of 1890-91 had its roots in a resolution passed by the Cardiff shipowners in August 1890 supporting the 'right of free labour', for the union response was, as in London, to picket Mercantile Marine Offices to ensure that only union members could sign-on. The coal-tippers supported the seamen, and J. Havelock Wilson staged a series of demonstrations in the town. The depot ship Speedwell was stationed in Penarth Roads, and drafts of up to 200 men at a time were supplied by the Liverpool crimps to man outward-bounders. In March 1891 Wilson proposed a truce, but neither side would yield, and when the strike ended after eight weeks Wilson was imprisoned for organising unlawful assemblies and causing a riot. An assessment of the events of 1890-91 must start with an appreciation that the Shipping

1. For a detailed account of the 1893 strike see Brown, Waterfront Organisation in Hull 66-87.

Federation and the Sailors' and Firemen's Union were both young organisations and that a trial of strength was taking place. As to who was the victor, there are two answers. In the short term the Shipping Federation emerged as top dog, and the power and influence of the union was greatly curtailed.¹ The wider view is that Wilson came out of prison in 1891 a national figure,² and from the experiences of 1890-91 a national figure with a coherent policy. His targets now were improved food scales, better accommodation, proper manning regulation and the eight-hour day,³ and these objectives could be attained without recourse to the strike weapon. He was prepared to be conciliatory, and Raymond Brown's (1972) view that Wilson 'was always spoiling for a fight'⁴

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1. Union membership halved between 1890 and 1892 according to Matthew Swainston in his unpublished study 'Merchant Seamen' 220. The typescript of this document is lodged at the National Union of Seamen headquarters at Old Town, Clapham, and while it is an informative account its authority is weakened by an absence of indications as to source material.
 2. He was elected as MP for Middlesborough in 1892, and although defeated in the 'khaki' election of 1901 was re-elected in 1906.
 3. The victory of the gas-workers in respect of the eight-hour day had been unexpected, and it immediately became the fashion among union leaders to include the eight-hour day in any list of demands.
 4. Brown, Waterfront Organisation in Hull 61.

is not supported by the facts.¹ He had a new platform through his seat in Parliament, and although he was to suffer initial defeats there,² and be beaten again in 1893 as he had been in 1889 and 1890-91, the low point of his fortunes was in 1895 when the membership struggle was acute.³ As will be shown, the first significant union victory may be dated from 1910-11 when Wilson had established his union on a 'proper and honest basis, worked by honest men'⁴ and when the work-force in large steamers had an industrial background approximating to that in workshops and factories on land.

The strike at Hull in 1893 began as a local stoppage in support of the Leeds tanners,⁵ but soon

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1. In 1892 Wilson came to an agreement with the National Association of Boarding House Masters - an organisation that may fairly be described as the crimps' trade union - whereby they collected arrears of union dues from their lodgers. In the same year he approached the Shipping Federation to propose a common front to keep freight rates high. The latter organisation replied coldly that such a course was commercially unrealistic. Wilson's own view was that the shipowners had 'reduced us to a negligible quantity' after the 1890-91 dispute - My Stormy Voyage Through Life 206.
 2. His Seamen's Rating Bill of 1893 was abandoned: the Seamen's Provisions Bill of the same year was withdrawn - see Hansard 4 15 852.
 3. In June 1895 Wilson was reduced to offering union membership at a bargain entrance fee of 2/6d - see Fairplay XXIV 631 1170.
 4. A phrase used by James Fitzpatrick, a fireman and union activist, to describe the kind of union the men wanted to the Royal Commission on Labour. FFRRCL 1894 Q.16,275.
 5. Wilson, My Stormy Voyage Through Life 273.

evolved into a struggle between the Sailors' and Firemen's Union and the Shipping Federation over pay and union recognition. Fearing a breakdown of law and order, the Hull magistrates asked for military aid, and the town was virtually garrisoned by soldiers. Allegations of violence and intimidation were common on both sides, with the Shipping Federation alleging that strikes were threatening the families of the 'free' labourers and seamen while union spokesmen said that police were attacking pickets.¹ J. Havelock Wilson went to the House of Commons on 4 May 1893 to claim that the Shipping Federation was an illegal organisation creating disorder and manning ships with incompetents, while Keir Hardie² declared that as the Hull magistracy was dominated by shipowners the workers would never obtain justice before the courts. John Burns, the Member for Battersea and for many years a campaigner for seamen's rights,³ gave substance to Hardie's allegations. His researches showed that twenty-three out of thirty-eight of the Hull magistrates had shipping

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1. Powell, The Shipping Federation 17 and Hansard 4 12 78.
 2. James Keir Hardie (1856-1915), was the founder of the Independent Labour Party and the first Labour Member of Parliament, being elected in 1892. His opposition to the Boer and First World Wars held back the Labour Party early in the twentieth-century, and the failure of international socialism in 1914 to prevent the latter conflict hastened the end of his life.
 3. John Burns (1858-1943), was a socialist who refused to join the Labour Party, and is chiefly remembered as the first working man to become a cabinet minister - being President of the Local Government Board in Campbell-Bannerman's Liberal administration of 1905, and briefly at the Board of Trade in 1914.

interests, while five shipowners were on the fifteen-man Watch Committee. Wilson failed to get an adjournment motion through, but had the satisfaction of hearing the Prime Minister say that an unnecessary parade of military might was 'impolitic, unwise, and calculated to defeat the very purpose in view'.¹ The strike collapsed, and the Shipping Federation claimed another victory.

The stoppage at Liverpool in the same year was a straight-forward reaction to a wage cut, for a downturn in the economy had led to Leyland's, Lamport and Holt and the Allan line reducing wages by ten shillings a month. The Shipping Federation employed its usual tactics, but encountered for the first time a measure of disapproval on the part of a Local Marine Board. On this occasion the Allan liner Mongolian was towed out to anchor in the Mersey and the major part of the crew was supplied by a crimp, Mrs Langan, who charged between £2 and £2-5s a head - representing a fortnight's advance. Wilson had the crew interviewed in New York, and the subsequent enquiry by the Liverpool Marine Board shed a great deal of light on the methods used by companies belonging to the Federation.² Two of

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1. Hansard 4 12 81-118. Fifty years before Gladstone had been the junior minister at the Board of Trade, and although he always described himself as 'an out-and-out inequalitarian' his opinion of 1844 that merchant seamen were a class deserving the sympathy of the legislature does not seem to have changed.
 2. Report made to the Board of Trade attending the engagement of the Crew of the S.S. 'Mongolian', BPP 1893-94 (240) LXXX 335. The Liverpool Local Marine Board supplied the bulk of the information.

the stokers recruited to work on the Mongolian were tramps who had been picked up by a crimp's runner while asking the way to the casual ward of Liverpool workhouse. They had been taken to Mrs Langan's boarding house, given drink, and sent to bed. At two o'clock in the morning they were taken ('marched' is the word used in the report) to the docks and embarked on a tug. Once aboard the Mongolian they were signed-on and taken down to the stokehold to raise steam. William Simpson and John O'Brien, the two tramps, seem to have had very little idea of what was going on until shovels were put in their hands, and many others in the scratch crew were totally lacking in skill and had no knowledge of their duties. The strike failed, but the industry and officials were left with the indelible impression that Wilson's allegations that the Shipping Federation preferred to man ships with incompetents rather than employ union labour were correct, and that lines belonging to the Federation did not scruple to use crimps when it suited them.

The defeats of 1893 led to the liquidation of the old union, and when it was reconstituted in 1894 the word 'Amalgamated' had been dropped from the title together with friendly society status. The 'climax of militancy'¹ had been reached in 1889-91, and after 1893 the Sailors' and Firemen's Union was on the defensive

1. Taplin, Liverpool Dockers and Seamen 79.

until 1910. The heroic days of demonstrations, marches, occupations¹ and street confrontation were over: the new emphasis was on finance, membership² and building branches at the principal ports - as Wilson had always wanted. A degree of representation on influential committees was seen as more important than organising pickets; manoeuvring to get serving seamen on Local Marine Boards more essential than purchasing elaborate banners.³ Moreover, Wilson saw clearly that in the long term the mere interposing of officials between employers and employed was of limited value,⁴ and that substantial improvements in the sailors' lot could best be achieved by face-to-face negotiation with employers' representatives at national level. In the short term, he had to mobilise Liberal support in the House and elsewhere to campaign for improvemental changes at a time when the gains made in 1867-83 were being eroded.

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1. On one occasion J. Havelock Wilson and his followers occupied a workhouse and demanded the privileges of a pauper's existence.
 2. It had fallen to 18,000 by 1893. Matthew Swainston's *Merchant Seamen* 220. Less than 8% of the total workforce was unionised.
 3. Wilson said in his autobiography that the verbal tradition in the north-east was that many early unions had drifted into bankruptcy because, in emulation of the miners, a large proportion of the funds had been spent on silk banners.
 4. He believed that Mercantile Marine Office staff were no more than 'Government-paid crimps' - My Stormy Voyage Through Life 77.

The Merchant Shipping (Payment of Wages and Rating) Act of 1880 had four elements that had been commended by the reformers. Conditional advance notes had been made illegal (s.2), and a seaman could allot up to half of his pay to near relatives (s.4). There was a qualifying period for the rank of Able Seaman (s.7), and it seemed as though imprisonment for desertion or failing to join a ship after having contracted to do so had been abolished by s.10. The conditional advance note was reintroduced in 1889,¹ while it was soon found that the allotment system could be manipulated by crimps to provide an extra source of income.² The requirement that a man should serve for four years before being rated as an Able Seaman was eminently sensible, but as there were no penalties for non-compliance it was widely disregarded. When, on 5 March 1891, Joseph Chamberlain tabled a question in the House of Commons about the shipping of incompetent men as Able Seamen at Cardiff, the reply from Sir Michael Hicks Beach,³ President of the Board

1. By s.2(4) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1889, 52 & 53 Vic c 46. There was a limit, which was frequently disregarded, that a conditional advance note should be for no more than a months' wages.

2. Allotments could be made to the 'wife, father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, child, grandchild, brother or sister' of the seaman. Crimps were quick to persuade men to sign notes for the benefit of 'sisters', and Edward Tupper, active in union affairs in the early twentieth-century, believed that at this time most allotment notes were fictions concocted by crimps. Edward Tupper, Seamen's Torch (1938) 22.

3. Michael Edward Hicks Beach (1837-1916), was a Tory landowner who was President of the Board of Trade from 1888-92. According to his DNB entry, he was a 'thorough conservative of the old school'.

of Trade, was to the effect that Superintendents of Mercantile Marine Offices had no power to prevent inexperienced men without documentation being signed-on as Able Seamen. In a further exchange with Chamberlain on 16 March 1891 he indicated that the crimps who had supplied the inexperienced men at Cardiff had been prosecuted and convicted of other offences, but quoted the portion of the 1887 Final Report of the Royal Commission on Loss of Life at Sea that said 'there is great laxity in this respect. Men are constantly being rated as ABs without any enquiry as to their past services ... Nor does it appear that ... this can be prevented'.¹ Two years later, Wilson tried to introduce certificates for some classes of seafarers in his Seamen's Rating Bill, but it was eventually withdrawn.² When the 1894 Merchant Shipping Act came on the statute book s.126 repeated the requirement of four years' sea service, but there was still no penalty for failing to comply with it. The Board of Trade also sought certification from the late 1880s,³ and the 1887 Final Report of the Royal Commission on the Loss of Life at Sea contained a recommendation that, as a check on qualifications, Able Seamen should be issued with Continuous Discharge Books.⁴ In the event,

1. Hansard 3 351 224 and 1049.

2. Hansard 4 15 852.

3. It was suggested in the Report on the Supply of British Seamen prepared by Thomas Gray in 1886. BPP 1886 LIX 199.

4. FRRCLLS 1887 128.

these books were issued to all ranks in 1900 for quite a different reason,¹ and it is ironic that Wilson's initiative - designed to exclude foreign seamen and lascars from jobs - and Board of Trade moves to check desertion and establish the good character of job applicants, both derived from a suggestion first made by a crimp as far back as 1878.²

After 1880 the legal position in respect of desertion or failing to join a ship having contracted to do so was complex. Even the experts were confused, and T.H. Farrer believed, quite wrongly, that the position was that 'refusal to perform a contract to serve at sea is now treated like other refusals to

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1. Principally to check desertion. Continuous Discharge Certificates were in book form and contained a description and photograph of the holder. When each voyage had been completed an entry was made showing the holder's rank, character and ability. The columns for character and ability were generally marked 'V.G.' (Very Good), but rarely a conscientious master might insert 'D.R.' (Decline to Report). A 'Bad' discharge was very bad indeed, and 'Good' was fairly damning.
 2. When John Harris, a London 'outfitting crimp' who made his profits from discounting advance notes for shoddy clothing and a little cash, gave evidence to the Select Committee on the Merchant Seamen Bill in 1878 he produced a Swedish discharge book containing a photograph, description and spaces for observations on character and ability that he had acquired from one of his customers. The Committee had evidently not seen such a document before, and even the concept was new to them. RSCMSB 1878 QQ.5299-5306. The specific suggestion that British seamen should have a similar document came from Henry G. Wilcox, the principal officer of the Board of Trade at Liverpool, in 1893 during the Mongolian enquiry - see BPP 1893-94 LXXX 343.

serve, as a breach of civil contract'.¹ The correct legal situation was that a seaman who deserted lost his possessions left on board and his back wages. If the desertion took place abroad he also lost any wages earned on the return trip to the United Kingdom, had to pay the excess wages of any substitute and could be imprisoned for up to twelve weeks, with or without hard labour. The man who failed to join his ship on time could be fined two days' pay initially, and then have deducted up to six further days' pay for each twenty-four hours of absence, or pay for a substitute. If the offence took place abroad he could go to prison for up to ten weeks, with or without hard labour.²

In the United Kingdom, a deserter or absentee could be arrested by a master, mate, owner, ship's husband or consignee and taken aboard by force unless he specifically requested to go before a Court. That Court had the power to order that he be 'conveyed on board his ship for the purpose of proceeding on the voyage' and thus be compelled to fulfill his contract.³ The sole effect of s. 10 of the 1880 Act that Farrer based his observation on was that seamen were no longer imprisoned for failing to join merchant ships in the United Kingdom. The element of compulsion was strong in fishing and whaling vessels

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1. T.H. Farrer, The State in its Relation to Trade (1902) 150.
 2. As codified by s. 221 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894, 57 & 58 Vic c 60.
 3. SS. 222-224 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894.

where the offence commonly referred to as 'being a disobedient fisherman failing to obey a lawful command' was still being dealt with by the Courts as late as 1969. The procedure employed by United Kingdom magistrates in fishing ports was that warrants were issued for the detention of hands who failed to join their ships, and those who could not pay fines were imprisoned for up to four weeks. Where the hand asked for 'time to pay' and then made off without doing so the magistrates would issue committal warrants so that the man went straight to prison on being apprehended.¹ As early as 1880, Joseph Chamberlain had promised to abolish imprisonment for breach of contract,² but seamen continued to be employed for the next ninety years under legal restraints unknown to other groups of workers. Wilful disobedience of orders, for example, was still punishable with up to four weeks' imprisonment, and leaving a ship without permission after berthing, but before formal discharge, could cost the seaman a months' pay.³ No factory hand, manual worker or day labourer in agriculture was liable to such penalties for actions of this kind, and moreover they were free to strike at the place of employment: a seaman could

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1. I am indebted to Skipper Tim Cresswell of the Lowestoft trawler Gloria for this information, which is contained in a personal letter dated 12 December 1979. Authority for the procedure outlined here derives from s.376 and s.380 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894.
 2. Hansard 3 252 530.
 3. SS. 225(1)(b) and 225(1)(a) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894.

only withhold his labour while on shore and picket his place of employment at a distance.

One of the root causes of this continuing disparity in treatment was that the Merchant Shipping Act of 1894 was, like the 1854 Act, a consolidating measure with few innovations. Introduced on 25 August 1893 by Anthony Mundella, President of the Board of Trade,¹ the Merchant Shipping Bill was dealt with in a leisurely fashion by a Joint Committee of both Houses presided over by the Lord Chancellor. Mundella had indicated clearly at the beginning what sort of Bill it would be. 'There is no intention', he said, 'of hurrying this Bill through the House ... the Bill in no substantial sense increases the power of the Board of Trade, imposes new penalties or creates new offences'.² The corollary of this last phrase must be that old penalties and old offences were to remain in force. The Employers' Liability Bill was under consideration at the same time, and the then Home Secretary, Herbert Asquith,³ was involved in both measures. In relation to the latter, his attitude was that seamen would have to be dealt with later, and separately,⁴ although six

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1. Anthony John Mundella (1825-1897), was of Italian immigrant stock and served as the Liberal MP for Sheffield from 1868 to 1897. He is best remembered as the initiator of the Labour Department at the Board of Trade.
 2. Hansard 4 16 1876.
 3. Herbert Henry Asquith (1852-1928), was MP for East Fife from 1886 to 1918, and Liberal Prime Minister from 1908-1916.
 4. Hansard 4 18 811.

years earlier the Royal Commission on the Loss of Life at Sea had recommended that the provisions of the Employers Liability Act of 1880 be extended to cover seamen.¹ J. Havelock Wilson had given telling evidence on the need for proper cover to the Commission, quoting the case of a vessel berthed at Mobile taking on ballast and using a hatch as an impromptu staging. The hatch gave way, but instead of setting up a proper staging the mate of the vessel got another hatch and ordered a second man to work on it. He refused, but two other men obeyed the order and worked on the hatch, and were drowned when it collapsed. No compensation was paid, and Wilson went on to underline the dilemma faced by men ordered to perform dangerous tasks. If they were killed or injured there was no compensation, and if they refused to do the work they could be imprisoned.²

The type of good intention expressed, but only partially implemented, as a result of the 1887 Final Report of the Royal Commission on the Lose of Life at Sea³ was repeated in the Fifth and Final Report of the Royal Commission on Labour of 1894 and the Manning Committee Report of 1896. The Royal Commission said that

1. FRRCLLS 1887 xxx.

2. FRRCLLS 1887 QQ.18,934-18,948.

3. Briefly, it had recommended a continuous certificate of service for ABs, the legalization of advance notes - accomplished in 1889, the extension of employers' liability provision to seafarers and examinations for some classes of petty officers.

seamen were under-represented and owners over-represented on Local Marine Boards,¹ and had suggested that the Board of Trade nominate 'suitable persons of the class of an AB' as one of their four nominees on each Board. It was also suggested that the seamen of the port concerned should have the right to vote representatives onto Boards, but as s.7 of the 1850 Act and the Seventh Schedule of the 1894 Act only permitted election by owners of foreign-going and home trade passenger ships this logical idea could have no practical effect.² The Royal Commission members had declared that although s.9 of the 1867 Act had decreed a minimum of seventy-two cubic feet of space per man the proper figure should be 120 cubic feet. As a result, the Board of Trade instructed its surveyors to point out 'the desirability of providing sufficient and healthy quarters for seamen',³

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1. Of the 184 members of Local Marine Boards in 1890, some 143 were involved in shipowning, according to FFRRCL 1894 429.
 2. In fact, the degree of under-representation was greater than stated. The 1890 Return of Local Marine Board Members on which the Royal Commission on Labour relied shows that 143 members had a direct interest in shipping, while forty-one did not. Only six members of the uncommitted forty-one had lower-deck experience: three were ex-seamen employed as secretaries of sailors' societies, one was a serving AB, one a seaman and one a deep-sea diver. Local Marine Boards, BPP 1890 (372) LXVI 73.
 3. Papers showing the action taken by the Board of Trade with regard to certain Recommendations of the Royal Commission on Labour respecting Seamen of the Mercantile Marine, BPP 1894 (C.7540) XXXV 117. (Referred to hereafter as BOTARRCL 1894).

but there was no legislation on this point for a further twelve years. The Royal Commission on Labour had called for the appointment of Inspectors of Medical Stores: none had been appointed by Local Marine Boards when subsequent enquiry was made.¹ A statutory diet scale was to have legislative priority,² but it did not become a reality until 1906. At the turn of the century, seafarers had to accept a diet based either on the old Liverpool Scale or the Board of Trade Scale of 1867-68 as written into crew agreements.³ The sole modification was that, through a compromise arrived at between the shipowners and Hicks Beach in 1892, ships trading through the Suez Canal or round Cape Horn or the Cape of Good Hope, were to have an inspection of food and water before sailing.⁴ The 1894 Act merely repeated earlier provisions whereby any three complainants could ask for a survey of bad food or tainted water⁵ but, as had been the case fifty years before, frivolous complaints were still to be punished by a fine of up to a weeks' pay.

The Royal Commission on Labour had called for a departmental enquiry on manning,⁶ and a manning committee sat and published its report in 1896.⁷ The

1. BOTARRCL 1894 118.

2. FFRRCL 1894 vii.

3. See Appendix Eleven (F) and (H).

4. S.3(1) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1892, 55 & 56 Vic c 37. See also Hansard 4 5 411-412.

5. S. 57 of the 1844 Act: s.198 of the 1894 Act.

6. FFRRCL 1894 vi.

7. Mundella set up this committee: J. Havelock Wilson and George A. Laws, General Manager of the Shipping Federation, were members.

evidence of seamen of all ranks was overwhelmingly in favour of a compulsory manning scale, with Captain E.B. Hatfield, a Liverpool shipowner and master mariner, declaring that there had been 'a more or less reckless disregard for keeping up what I should call a sound standard of manning', and George William Robinson, an Able Seaman with eighteen years service, testifying that 'the majority of vessels going to sea now are under-manned'. George Groot, forty-three years in command, believed that sailing ships were 'not half manned to what they were years ago' while Joseph Korzeniowski (Joseph Conrad) thought that in foreign-going steamers having only three men to a watch amounted to under-manning.¹ George William Robinson described graphically what happened in coasting steamers when only two men were on watch:

You must understand that whenever a light is passed - a lightship or a light on shore - the man is called off the lookout to look at the log and see what the vessel has gone at that particular point. Of necessity that man is called off the lookout to do that particular duty, unless the officer takes the wheel and lets the man at the wheel go to look at the log, or unless the officer goes himself; and it is always necessary for one man to leave the deck, whether from the wheel or lookout, to

1. Manning Committee Report, 1896, Q.6241, Q.16,834, Q.16,677 and Q.6309. The usual arrangement was that one man was at the wheel, one on lookout and the third employed as a standby to read the log and act as messenger. Duties were rotated hourly, but one man would have to work 'double-wheel' in each watch.

call the watch below, which invariably takes ten minutes to do.¹

One result of having only two men on watch at night was that, as in the Deeside case, if the lookout had to go forward to tend the sidelights and the officer of the watch and the helmsman were pre-occupied with a potential collision situation, there was no-one available to call the master.² Despite the weight of the evidence, however, the departmental committee came to the rather tame conclusion that while there had been a tendency to reduce crews, undermanning was not general.³ This conclusion was then hedged by a declaration that a manning scale was necessary. A standard of manning was recommended, and it is reproduced in Appendix Sixteen (A). The scale suggested that in a steamer of 2,750 tons there should be three mates and nine deckhands to give full coverage at night,⁴ with a minimum of nine 'effective hands' in a small sailing vessel under 400 tons. However, the tonnage/manning ratio arrived at by this committee did not give two four-man watches in steamers under 2,000 tons, while

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1. Manning Committee Report, 1896 Q.16,894.
 2. Manning Committee REport, 1896 QQ.62-63.
 3. A useful summary of the Report exists in a shilling pamphlet entitled Reports from the Departmental Committee on Manning of Merchant Ships with Addenda and Statistical Tables reprinted from the Shipping Gazette and Lloyds' List (1896). Copy on BLRD 8808 aa 16 3. Referred to henceforth as Lloyds' Manning Pamphlet 1896: this from p.4.
 4. The Merchant Service Guild - an officers' trade union - had called for four hands in each watch when giving evidence to the Manning Committee. Manning Committee Report, 1896 1007.

for sailing vessels the number of 'effective hands' was arrived at by including bosuns, carpenters and sailmakers who were normally 'daymen' and did not keep regular watches. A cook-steward was counted as two-thirds of a man, but in practice his only deck duty would consist of tending the foresheet when going about.¹ These non-mandatory recommendations² omitted any scale for engine-room personnel,³ and a glance at Appendix Sixteen (B) will show that in the twenty years between 1860 and 1880 the mean number of men employed per hundred tons of steam shipping had fallen by almost a half while in all classes of ships the manning ratio was down by a quarter. Larger vessels manifestly give economies of scale with regard to manning, but all the statistical and impressionistic evidence is that owners were following a policy of minimum manning in the period. Frank Bullen reports that the 1,225-ton sailing ship Western Belle had a 'very small crew' of twelve Able Seamen, one Ordinary Seaman, a Bosun, Carpenter, Sailmaker, Painter, Steward, Cook, three officers and three boys - some twenty-one 'effective hands' by the

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1. Hence the expression in common use and meaning that every man should stick to his trade - 'The gunner to the linstock, the steersman to the wheel and the cook to the foresheet'.
 2. At this time the only legal requirement was that emigrant ships should have an 'efficient crew' as laid down by s.28 of the Passenger Act 1855, 18 & 19 Vic c 119.
 3. In the 1870s, insurance clubs insisted on one fireman and one AB for every hundred registered tons - PRO MT/9 86 M.3123/1874.

1896 criteria, but only the Able Seamen and the Second Mate would have worked regularly aloft - thirteen out of the twenty-five men and boys aboard.¹ When Captain G.G. Randell joined the 1,187-ton Sunderland tramp Audacious in 1898 as Second Mate he found that there were three men in each watch, and two of them had to steer in all but the finest weather because the ship's wheel was turned wholly by muscle power and rope stoppers were employed to hold it against the push of the screw.² The shipowners were implacably hostile to any system whereby manning was determined by government, and George A. Laws refused to sign the Manning Committee Report on behalf of the Shipping Federation because he felt that a tonnage-based method took no account of differences between individual ships while insisting that the Report contained a phrase indicating that under-manning did not, of itself, amount to unseaworthiness.³ The Act of 1897 that was supposed to implement the recommendations of the Manning Committee proved to be dead letter, for while s.1 gave power to detain undermanned ships and treat them as unsafe there was no statutory definition of undermanning, and the section could not be employed unless ships were so weakly manned that they could have scarcely left port

1. Bullen, The Log of a Sea Waif 163.

2. A.G. Course, The Deep Sea Tramp (1960) 7-11.

3. Manning Committee Report, 1896 xxxix and vii-viii.

in the first place.¹

The association between hours of work and a manning scale was emphasised by four members of the 1894 Royal Commission on Labour who said, in a minority report, that a comprehensive manning scale would eventually result in an eight-hour day.² Stokers and trimmers in some of the larger lines already had the eight-hour day because of the arduous nature of their employment, but the rest of the workforce was either on watch-and-watch (four hours on duty followed by four hours off duty), or were 'daymen'. The length of 'days' varied, but for Oliver Bernard, a cabin-boy in the Manchester Commerce in 1899, it ran from 5am to 10pm.³ A.E. Dingle was an under-steward in the P & O liner Shannon in 1897 and records that he rose at 5am to scrub out, worked until after lunch, took a brief siesta and then worked again until 9pm.⁴ Jack McLaren served in a 1,400-ton barque in 1905 and wrote feelingly about the tyranny of the watch-and-watch system in the following passage:

Four-hours-on-and-four-hours-off - it made up the rhythm of our days and nights, ABs and OSs alike, our days and weeks and weeks. Never once in all that time could a seaman sleep in one stretch more than three and three quarter hours ... an 'all night in' was a luxury, a something to

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1. The Merchant Shipping Act, 60 & 61 Vic c 59.
 2. BOTARRCL 1894 6-7.
 3. Oliver P. Bernard, Cock Sparrow (1936) 72.
 4. A.E. Dingle, A Modern Sinbad (1933) 125-128. The book was originally published anonymously.

revel in, gloat over, and look forward to.¹

The absence of any manning legislation may be held to account in part for the continuing long working day for seamen, but three other factors must be mentioned. First, these were hard times in this particular field of employment, for while seamen's wages fell between 4% and 5% in the period 1890-1905² the national product per head at current prices rose by over 8%.³ Second, there was unrestricted entry of labour, and shipowners used foreign and lascar labour whenever it was expedient to do so. Lastly, J. Havelock Wilson's union was in no position to press for a decrease in working hours because it was numerically weak and had not completed its cohesive network of port branches. Wilson made no mention of the eight-hour day between 1891 - when it was included in a list of aims - and July 1910 when he called for a National Wages Board, fixed hours of work and a manning scale.⁴ During the First World War Wilson concentrated on achieving a 'closed shop', and made few pronouncements on the subject of hours of work. As a consequence, there was no regulation of the working day in the period

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1. Jack McLaren, My First Voyage (1947) 57.
 2. Hansard 4 143 195. See also Appendix Fifteen (A) which shows the mean monthly pay of ABs in sail as £3-5s a month in 1890 and £3 a month in 1905. Firemen were getting £4-12s a month in 1890, but only £4-5s in 1905.
 3. P.M. Deane and W.A. Cole, British Economic Growth, 1688-1959 (1962) 282.
 4. The Story of the Seamen 14.

studied, and seafarers were still working an eighty-four-hour week in the 1930s.

In Chapter Five it was shown that homeward-bound crimping had ceased to be a problem by 1886, and one of the last convictions for this type of offence in the United Kingdom was recorded on 30 December 1887 at the Justice's Court Hall, Glasgow when John Anderson was fined £10 and ordered to pay £2 costs for going aboard a merchant ship without permission.¹ Abroad, the situation was as bad as ever. In the month following the Anderson conviction a master wrote to the Board of Trade from the West Coast to complain that 'The crimps were alongside before the Doctor's visit² and within ten minutes of the Ship receiving Pratique³ fifteen of my crew were on their way ashore with their effects. In looking for a crew, I found it of no use fighting against the extortion practised by the Boarding Masters in demanding \$30 blood money for each seaman'.⁴ When, in May 1888, a seaman called George Copeland was murdered at a crimping house in Dunkirk there was strong public demand for the extension of the Transmission of Wages

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1. Glasgow Herald, 31 December 1887.
 2. A medical officer was, and is, always the first person to board an incoming ship, and until he gives the crew a clean bill of health no other person should be in contact with them.
 3. A Certificate of Pratique confirms that there is no communicable disease among the crew.
 4. He was Captain E. White of the Drumblair, and his letter was dated 20 January 1888 - see PRO MT/9 328 M.4338/88.

Scheme to foreign ports,¹ and the scheme was steadily extended so that by 1911-12 about a quarter of a million pounds was being transmitted annually. However, one shortcoming of the scheme was that there was a 3d in the pound users' fee so that seamen often preferred to be paid off in cash, and progress proved to be unspectacular.² In 1893, when there was a departmental enquiry into the transmission of wages,³ the Board of Trade took a complacent view with an official declaring that 'It is only the outward bound seaman that the crimp gets anything out of'.⁴ This complacency was unwarranted insofar as the near Continental ports were concerned, for evidence was shortly to emerge showing that crimps had changed with the times and were operating within the system and with official sanction.

An enquiry in 1897 led to the disclosure that crimps had evolved into what were euphemistically termed

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1. See the Daily Chronicle for 26 May 1888 and The Observer for 27 May 1888. Paradoxically, the Vice-Consul at Dunkirk, one Edward Taylor, had just submitted a report on Crimping at ports between the Elbe and Brest (that is, within home trade limits) and the Transmission of Wages Scheme was already in operation at Dunkirk. See PRO MT/9 321 M.6047/88 and M.10410/88.
 2. Transmission of Wages Scheme, BPP 1913 (Cd.7033) LX 111. In 1889-90 the figure was about 20% lower - see BPP 1890 LXVI 128.
 3. Report of the Board of Trade departmental committee on the Transmission of Seamen's Wages, BPP 1893-94 (C.7179) LXXX 387. Referred to hereafter as Wages Report, 1893-94.
 4. Wages Report, 1893-94 Q.7. Complacency and lack of urgency are the keynotes of this report. The fifth paragraph makes it clear that the extension of the scheme was to take place in a 'tentative and deliberate manner'.

'shipping masters'.¹ The British Consul at Hamburg actually had two of these shipping masters working in his office, and he defended the practice by saying that 'they do a considerable amount of work that makes things easier; they see that the old articles and the official log are properly signed before handing in; they make out the seamen's accounts and do everything ...'.² The shipping masters at Antwerp charged between five and eight francs for subsequently finding a seaman a berth, collecting the money quite openly in the Consulate, while at Hamburg the going rate was ten marks.³ J. Havelock Wilson was concerned that the provisions of s.186 of the 1894 Act relating to discharge abroad were being blatantly ignored, with seamen being put ashore abroad without proper provision for their repatriation. The purpose was, according to Wilson,

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1. The enquiry led to the Report of the Committee on the Engagement and Discharge of British Seamen at ports on the Continent within home-trade limits, BPP 1897 (C.8577) LXXVIII 63, which is referred to hereafter as the Report on Discharges, 1897. Commander W. Dawson, Secretary of the Seamen's Mission, gave the following explanation of the evolution process. 'Driven off from the paying off of the men, they have turned to the engagement of seamen and call themselves 'shipping masters'. Report on Discharges, 1897 Q.2135.
 2. Evidence of the Hon. Charles Dundas, Consul-General at Hamburg. Report on Discharges, 1897 Q.4899.
 3. Report on Discharges, 1897 69.

purely economic,¹ but the result was that these men fell easily into the hands of crimps. The shipowners' defence of their acquiescence in these arrangements was that 'you cannot get the seamen except through the boarding-house keepers',² but as the explanation came from the General Manager of the Shipping Federation, George A. Laws, and that organisation had relied heavily on crimps to supply labour during the strikes of 1890-93, it seems a weak argument. The Committee recommended that the 3d in the pound fee for use of the Transmission of Wages Scheme and for remitting Money Orders be abolished so that seamen be encouraged to send their earnings home; that Consuls be 're-instructed' in relation to discharges abroad and that shipping masters be 'discouraged'.³ It did not touch at all on the heart of the matter - that the two shillings signing-on fee payable by seamen when engaged in the presence of a Consul represented a

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1. The appropriate passage is to be found in the Report on Discharges, 1897 QQ.1022-1023 and reads: 'You say it has become the practice to pay off more frequently in foreign ports? Yes, since 1890. That was in consequence no doubt of the higher wages: in order to try and get men at a cheaper rate? Yes. The wages at that time in England were £4-15s a month, whereas at continental ports they were only £3-15s to £4 so that by discharging a more expensive English crew at foreign ports they were enabled to sign on cheaper men in their place, and they would probably have the same men to start the next voyage at £3-15s each'.
 2. Report on Discharges, 1897 QQ.1984-1985.
 3. Report on Discharges, 1897 72.

considerable source of income to these officials and had led some of them to cultivate, and accommodate, crimps.

The last stronghold of forcible crimping was North America, where a wide range of crimping techniques was employed down to the outbreak of the First World War. In the Forest King case of 1886, for example, the ships' officers 'hazed'¹ one crew out of the ship at New York, signed-on a number of shilling-a-month men from a crimping house and later delivered them penniless into the tender care of another crimp in Belgium with the connivance of a corrupt clerk at the Amsterdam Consulate.² On the West Coast, crimp bosses such as Shanghai Brown in San Francisco, Larry Sullivan at Portland, Limey Dirk at Port Townsend and Cockney Jack at Vancouver had such a grip on the waterfront and such a wide range of contacts in the police, judiciary and the local political machines that they were virtually above the law.³ At these ports, crimping was often a matter of

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1. That is, bullied them so that they left the ship. This device was employed so that no wages need be paid, and it was a device often forced on masters by owners. The master of the Grassendale, detained for months at Martinez awaiting a grain cargo in 1892, wrote home that he had 'received strict orders not to pay them (the crew) anything, but - mark you - "Get rid of them if you can"'. Alfred J. Green, Jottings from a Cruise (Seattle, 1947 edition) 202.
 2. Correspondence relating to the Crimping of the Crew of the Forest King, BPP 1886 (94-Sess.2) LIX 273.
 3. Stan Hugill, Sailortown (1967) 190-221 and Basil Lubbock, Round the Horn Before the Mast (1902) 21-22.

simple kidnapping, with miners, cowboys and hoboes shipped out unconscious from drink, drugs or hard usage to serve before the mast. Profits from crimping were volatile, as may be shown by referring back to an episode in 1873-74. In the former year the boarding house proprietors of San Francisco were getting a \$40 bonus for each man shipped, but in 1874 the British Consul had to warn masters that demanding a bonus from crimps to take seamen off their hands was illegal. Thomas Gray noted on the file, 'This is curious as showing how the laws of Economy can be upset', and T.H. Farrer added his observation - 'A very curious case of Tables turned ...'.¹ Usually, however, the price of crimped sea labour varied according to latitude and season. The Liverpool Shipowners Association compiled a dossier on Crimping at US Ports² at the turn of the century which showed this aspect clearly. In June 1899 at Portland 'blood money' was \$55 a man, while at San Francisco in December it was only \$25.³ Further north at Puget Sound and Tacoma the rate was \$75 throughout 1900-01. The master of the Glenogil reported at this time that the crimping interest was so powerful that he had to pay \$75 for men who had not passed through a crimps' hands but had signed-on in

1. PRO MT/9 74 M.5873/1873 and MT/9 88 M.15455/1874.

2. PRO MT/9 696 M.10068/01.

3. There are, of course, many alternative forms of work in agriculture, forestry and construction during the months of summer - hence the higher 'blood money'.

the ordinary way, and Basil Lubbock had the same experience.¹ Crimping flourished because desertion could not be checked, and deserters provided the bulk of the crimps' raw material. When a solution was found to the problem of desertion, crimping swiftly withered and died.

The Board of Trade was well aware that crimping and desertion were linked, and did its best to provide explanations and suggest remedies. It had long been appreciated that wage disparity gave a powerful incentive to desert, and it had been noted in 1878 that desertion in the United States had fallen when the wage differential narrowed.² In 1896 the Board published a preliminary analysis of the problem, which had some good features, but was misleading in one respect.³ It was shown that deserters fell into two main categories - Able Seamen and firemen, and passage workers such as cattlemen and shilling-a-month hands who were expected to desert on arrival. After deducting the latter group, the Board of Trade assessment of the annual rate of desertion at home and abroad, in sail and steam, was that 44.2% of the workforce was deserting annually.⁴ This staggeringly high figure was not

1. PRO MT/9 696 M.10102/01 and Lubbock, Round the Horn before the Mast 8.

2. RSCMSB 1878 Q.1011. Evidence of P. Talbot Peterson of the London Ship Masters Society.

3. British Ships (Desertion of Seamen Abroad), BPP 1896 (299) LXXV 85.

4. See Table One.

challenged at the time, but it is now possible to make a more realistic assessment from other data. The Board of Trade statisticians had made the error of including failures-to-join in with desertions, and the true numerical desertion figure for 1895 is given in Table Two overleaf. When applied to the number of seamen, obtained from Appendix Three, the true percentage of desertions in 1895 is as shown in Table Three. The desertion rate was 1.7% annually at home, but one in thirteen British seamen was deserting abroad. Was this latter figure abnormally high? The answer would seem to be that it was, for while the figure of 14,502 men deserting abroad in 1895 is very close to the figure for all desertions for 1847,¹ the mean figures for the larger period 1895-1900 are about a third up from the mean figures for 1845-53 - even when allowance is made for an increase in the workforce of about a quarter.² As a consequence, when Admiral Field, the Member for Eastbourne, called for an enquiry into desertion in May 1898 the Board of Trade responded with alacrity, and Consuls were circulated. The results were published in a paper entitled Merchant Shipping (Desertion of Seamen) in the following year.³

1. See Appendix Seven: 14,360 men deserted in that year.

2. See Appendices Three and Seven.

3. Merchant Shipping (Desertion of Seamen), BPP 1899 (C.9265) LXXXVII 119. Referred to hereafter as the Field Enquiry, 1899.

Table One: Desertions at home and abroad in 1895 as a percentage of the total employed according to BPP 1896 LXXV 85.

	<u>United Kingdom</u>	<u>Abroad</u>
Sailing Ships	3.7%	15.3%
Steamships	16.6%	8.6%

Table Two: The number of deserters at home and abroad in 1895 from BPP 1901 LXVIII 71.

	<u>United Kingdom</u>	<u>Abroad</u>
All Ships	3,629	14,502

Table Three: Adjusted percentage of 1895 desertions

	<u>United Kingdom</u>	<u>Abroad</u>
All Ships	1.7%	7.8%

Table Four: Ethnic origins of seamen at work on the census dates in 1891, 1896 and 1901.

<u>Year</u>	<u>British seamen</u>	<u>Foreign seamen</u>	<u>Lascars</u>	<u>Total</u>
1891	127,567	23,884	21,322	172,773
1896	125,009	27,446	27,911	180,366
1901	120,412	32,614	33,611	186,637

Sources: BPP 1896 LXXV 85, BPP 1901 LXVIII 71, BPP 1902 XCII 282 and PRO MT/9 741 M.18161/02.

The most notable feature of the Field Enquiry was that it confirmed the existence of wage disparity. The Consul at Baltimore reported that American wages averaged £1 a month higher than British wages, while the San Francisco representative said that while British wages were £2-15s to £3 a month for Able Seamen they averaged £4 a month on the West Coast.¹ Most of the West Coast desertions were said to 'take place directly after the vessels arrive' due to the activities of crimps,² and the San Francisco Consul recommended that advances be restricted to one months' wages to make the seaman a less attractive proposition to the crimps. Wage disparity was, however, thought to be less marked than in earlier decades, and the desertion rate was down from 25% of all British crews calling at San Francisco in 1888 to 12% in 1897, although at Portland, Oregon the rate stood at 24% in the latter year.³ The British representative at Rosario said that masters continued to be in league with crimps, and took gratuities to turn men adrift abroad so as to provide the crimps with raw material for their trade. At Sydney, wages in colonial ships were almost double

1. Field Enquiry, 1899 122.

2. Sir David Bone noted that 'scarcely was our anchor down in 'Frisco Bay than the boarding-house 'crimps' were alongside, beaming with good fellowship, and tumbling over one another in their anxiety to shake 'Jack' by the hand, and to tell him of the glorious opportunities for smart sailor-men ashore'. David W. Bone, The Brassboulder (1942, Penguin) 71.

3. Field Enquiry, 1899 123-124.

those in British ships, thus giving men a powerful incentive to desert, while the Secretary of Trade and Customs at Melbourne reported that high wages ashore, poor food afloat and a two months' advance spent in the United States before sailing were compelling reasons leading to a high level of desertion at Australian ports. The Consul at Marseilles came to similar conclusions, and believed that the institution of a continuous certificate of discharge might be the best solution.¹ The idea was not new,² but Board of Trade officials had come to look on it with favour and on 18 April 1899 Charles Ritchie,³ President of the Board since 1896, ordered that a departmental committee investigate the matter and report their findings.⁴

Prior to 1900, discharge certificates took the form of thin printed forms known to seamen as 'flims' or 'flimsies', and the history of these documents goes back to 1729. The 'Act for the better Regulation and Government of Seamen in the Merchants Service' had

1. Field Enquiry, 1899 125-165.

2. It was first mooted in 1878 - see RSCMSB 1878 QQ. 5299-5306.

3. Charles Thomas Ritchie (1838-1906), was an early progressive Tory who was President of the Board of Trade between 1896 and 1900.

4. The Report of the Committee appointed by the Board of Trade on the Question of Continuous Discharge Certificates for Seamen is at BPP 1900 (Cd.133) LXXVII 99, and is referred to hereafter as the Discharge Certificate Report, 1900.

provided that seamen should have a written statement of wages earned,¹ and in the course of time it became the common practice that when a man received his wages account on discharge it was endorsed with the master's remarks as to his conduct and ability. In 1835 the form that these settlement of wages certificates should take was set out in a schedule to the Merchant Shipping Act of that year,² and the 1850 Act laid down that a separate document 'in a Form sanctioned by the Board of Trade' should provide 'a Report of the Conduct, Character and Qualifications of the Persons discharged'.³ Unfortunately, these 'flimsies' had no representation or description of the holders, were not robust⁴ and, like the register tickets of 1844, were readily obtainable for small sums, and were traded in freely by seamen and crimps alike. Additionally, it was perfectly possible to get hold of another man's discharges on payment of a penny from the office of the Registrar-General of Seamen on Tower Hill,⁵ and

1. 2 Geo II c 36, second paragraph.

2. 37 Geo III c 73.

3. 13 & 14 Vic c 93.

4. Consequently, these documents are now rare, but an example may be seen at the Arklow Maritime Museum, Ireland. It was issued to a seaman discharged from the Great Eastern and was, no doubt, retained by his family because of the historical association.

5. By the 1850 Act one of the two copies of the single-sheet discharge certificate was lodged there.

unqualified men could buy and use discharge tickets and certificates of service or competency issued to others. The author of A Modern Sinbad bought a master's papers in Mauritius and subsequently commanded a barque and a steamer in the 1890s although his experience barely qualified him to serve as an Able Seaman.¹ The Discharge Certificate Report, 1900 noted these shortcomings of the existing system, and added that masters tended to give 'very good' for character and ability too freely. It was recommended that continuous discharge certificates be introduced, but the Report was lukewarm as to the potential effect on character, saying that the change would not alter character although it might improve discipline.² The benefits that might be expected from the institution of continuous discharge certificates were outlined by a number of witnesses, but not given any emphasis by the Committee. Chief among them was that where a discharge book was lodged with the mate once a man had signed-on he would have the greatest difficulty finding another ship if he deserted or failed to join.³ The new certificates greatly strengthened the position of Superintendents of Mercantile

1. Dingle, A Modern Sinbad 110-173.

2. Discharge Certificate Report, 1900 104-106.

3. See the evidence of Captain T.D. Bulkeley, late of the Royal Mail Line, William Brown, secretary of the North Shields branch of the Sailors' and Firemen's Union and George Alexander Laws for the Shipping Federation - Discharge Certificate Report, 1900 QQ. 1990-2220.

Marine Offices who had the duty of keeping registers of deserters,¹ and the success rate of the scheme at home was dramatic. Between 1900 and 1908 the number of deserters in the United Kingdom fell by 70%, and the number of failures-to-join halved. Desertion abroad fell by 20%, but failures-to-join scarcely altered.² The institution of the Continuous Discharge Certificate may, therefore, be assessed as having been an effective means of checking desertion at home, but less effective abroad where the demand for sea labour was such that a scrupulous adherence to legal forms could not be counted on.

The Navigation Laws had restricted the employment of foreigners in British vessels until the middle of the nineteenth-century, and a look back at Figure One will show that in the 1820s at least four out of five of those serving were of British origin. In 1853-54 all restrictions on the employment of aliens were removed so that shipowners could - as they had long desired - recruit seamen of any nationality.³ So long as the percentage of foreign seamen remained small there were few complaints from British seamen and their representatives, but by the early 1880s foreigners

1. By s.3 of the 1889 Act, 52 & 53 Vic c 46.

2. See Appendix Seven.

3. During the debate on the 1850 Bill Lord John Manners said that Parliament 'should abolish those distinctions respecting the employment of foreigners on board the merchant ships, as they presented sensible obstructions and hindrances to commerce and the interests of the shipowners'. Hansard 3 112 1451.

were seen to be about a seventh of the workforce¹ and when Thomas Gray circularised Mercantile Marine Offices and the shipowners in 1886 it transpired that 14% of the seamen and 2.4% of the masters were aliens. Their distribution was uneven, with few serving in coasters and the large steamers but a great number in medium-sized foreign-going ships and sailing vessels, and the Tyne ports, Hull and Cardiff were recording over 21% of foreign seamen among crews signing-on.² The proximity of Hull and Newcastle to Scandinavia and the winter freeze-up in the northern Baltic accounted largely for the availability of Baltic seamen at Hull and Newcastle, and shipowners had a distinct preference for them as employees. 'Scandinavians and Germans are more sober and obedient', said one, while another believed that 'foreign seamen are preferred to the ordinary British sailor as they are of better physique, have a better supply of clothes and are more skilful, sober, industrious and respectful'. 'The Aberdeen seaman', said another, 'would not ship at the current rate of wages and we send to Norway for crews'.³ Cardiff was able to attract cheap and docile labour because of the constant flow of coal exports which kept up demand for ships' crews,⁴ and foreign seamen flocked

1. See Appendix Three (iii).

2. BPP 1886 LIX 199-201.

3. BPP 1886 LIX 222-223.

4. See Martin Daunton 'Jack ashore: seamen in Cardiff before 1914', The Welsh History Review IX 2 1978.

there for work. E.F. Knight records a conversation with a Dutch seaman in Delfzyl in 1887 when the latter, speaking of his way of life, said 'I won't go to sea so long as I have a stuiver left. That's my way. When I've spent all my money I'll go to Cardiff and ship for what I can get, but not till then'.¹ Subsequent enquiry at Cardiff in 1894 showed that its popularity with foreign seamen had not waned. 35.9% of the Able Seamen signing-on steam vessels were foreigners, while in sail the figure was 43.5%, and 24.3% of firemen were aliens.² Foreign seamen seem to have been attracted to serve in British vessels for two main reasons - the large number of jobs available and the absence of bureaucracy. The most famous foreign-born seaman of the period, Joseph Conrad, was advised to join a British ship precisely 'because the British do not bother about the formalities'.³ J. Havelock Wilson and the Sailors' and Firemen's Union had been unhappy at Thomas Gray's recommendation of 1886 that as foreigners made up less than the 25% of the workforce no restrictions were necessary, and in the years that followed campaigned for control of entry by a number of devices.

Wilson's claim in his autobiography that he was only biased against foreign seamen because they accepted lower wages⁴ does not stand up to detailed

1. E.F. Knight, The Falcon on the Baltic (1889) 132.

2. Manning Committee Report, 1896 1010.

3. Baines, Joseph Conrad 58.

4. Wilson, My Stormy Voyage Through Life 98.

examination, for his union had from the start demanded heavy initial subscriptions from foreign seamen, and in his evidence before the Royal Commission on the Loss of Life at Sea in 1887 he had outlined a scheme whereby foreigners would have to serve longer probationary periods before being rated as Able Seamen or firemen.¹ Next, he mooted the idea of a language test, and in 1900 was urging its implementation on the grounds of safety.² The 1901 census of seamen gave Wilson valuable ammunition for a continued campaign against the employment of foreigners, for it gave the composition of the workforce on a given day and revealed that on the 31st March 1901 lascars and foreign seamen together made up more than a third of the number of men in employment. A comparison with the census figures for 1891 and 1896, reproduced on page 242 as Table Four, shows that the number of British seamen at work had declined both relatively and absolutely while the percentage of foreign seamen serving afloat was up from 13.8% to 17.5% and that of lascars up from 12.3% to 18% in the decade.³ These figures led Wilson into making further efforts to

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1. Wilson suggested that foreign seamen should have to serve an extra year at sea before being rated AB, and that foreigners should serve for five years as trimmers before promotion to firemen. FRRCLLS 1887 QQ.18,758-18,782.
 2. Discharge Certificate Report, 1900 Q.1485.
 3. Return of the Number, Ages, Ratings and Nationalities of Seamen employed on the 31st day of March 1901, BPP 1902 (Cd.1342) XCII 282.

exclude lascars and foreigners from the shipping industry, notably by saying that the former group were a source of danger because of their unfamiliarity with written and spoken English while the latter were security risks, but at the same time he was developing the theme of internationalism which weakened those arguments considerably. Eventually, he was able to reconcile both themes by taking the line that an international federation of seamen's unions would lead to equalized wages and remove the necessity for an influx of foreign seamen. The problem proved to be insoluble, even though an international federation of seamen's unions was eventually formed,¹ and British merchant ships continued to be crewed by a substantial proportion of foreign and Asiatic seamen down to the present day.²

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1. At the triennial congress of the International Transport Workers' Federation held at Miami in 1980 the problem was still being discussed - there being a resolution on the agenda to the effect that 'owners should give priority to domiciled crews'. See The Telegraph (organ of the Merchant Navy and Airline Officers Association) XII No.9, September 1980.
 2. After 1918 it became official policy that there should be no discrimination in crewing merchant vessels. The Final Report of the 1918 Departmental Committee on the position of the Shipping and Shipbuilding Industries after the War emphasised that 'any measure preventing the free employment of foreign seamen on British ships would be undesirable on account of the world-wide character of the shipping industry', and that no restrictions be placed on the employment of 'Asiatic or coloured seamen, whether British subjects or not'. BPP 1918 (Cd.9092) XIII 588. Enquiry of the General Council for British Shipping in June 1980 revealed that one in twelve British seafarers was a native of India, Pakistan or Bangladesh - the figures being 6,300 seamen from the Indian sub-continent out of a total 1980 workforce of 75,000.

An objective summary of the period 1884-1904 must begin with an acknowledgement that, except in a few areas, seamen were worse off at the end than they had been at the beginning. By and large, unionism had failed and the employers' organisation was dominant. Seamen had proved to be difficult to organise,¹ the legal restraints on their freedom of action were formidable, government tended to rely on non-mandatory recommendations rather than legislation when considering the sailor's lot, and the only Board of Trade initiative of any consequence was the institution of the Continuous Discharge Certificate. As Trevelyan so aptly put it, 'The later Victorians laid no far plans for the future',² and it would be right to say of these years that, as a class, seamen remained stationary at a time of general advance when living standards, and aspirations, were rising. Ashore, trades unions were beginning to be effective; hours of work were falling, housing conditions were improving and the Fabian Society, founded in 1884, was marshalling middle-class support and harrowing middle-class consciences to make socialist principles respectable. The last great evangelical

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1. A Fabian tract entitled Socialism and Sailors by Benjamin T. Hall, a former activist in the Sailors' and Firemen's Union, described the position of the seaman accurately. 'His sense of community is limited by the size of the fo'c's'le, and is only extended when he goes to sea in a larger vessel'. Fabian Tract No. 46 published by the Fabian Society in September 1893, 3.
 2. G.M. Trevelyan, English Social History (1973 edition) 556.

movement, the Salvation Army, was purging the town poor of its apathetic shiftlessness while the Workmen's Compensation Act, the Employer's Liability Act and the steady diffusion of the eight-hour day pointed to the new shape of industrial society. The agricultural worker had the franchise after 1884,¹ the death-rate fell dramatically through improvements in sanitation, water supply and medical knowledge, while imports of cheap frozen meat from Australia, New Zealand and the Argentine transformed the whole basis of working-class nutrition. Seamen, however, had been excluded from the benefits of the Workmen's Compensation Act and the Employer's Liability Act, they had to work unlimited hours, consume sub-standard food and sleep in cramped quarters. Their social status was low,² and where an improvement in the sailors' lot may be recorded it tends to derive from the previous era of benevolence rather than spring from an expression of late Victorian goodwill towards seamen.

In this regard, it should be noted that the passing of the Load Line Act of 1890,³ the Merchant

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1. The Liberal Party was the chief beneficiary and it captured the vote in the countryside as a result. After 1905 Liberals used this newly-attained ascendancy to implement a number of measures that improved the lot of seamen.
 2. Thirty-one out of the thirty-nine Prisoners' Aid Societies in existence in 1897 made it their business to find work at sea for discharged felons. Prisons (Discharged Prisoners Aid Societies), BPP 1897 (C. 8299) XL 63.
 3. 53 & 54 Vic c 9. Its proper title is the Merchant Shipping Act, 1890, but it is generally referred to by the more descriptive title.

Shipping Act of 1892¹ and the powers given by s.459 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1894 more properly represent a natural outcome and extension of the earlier agitation generally associated with the names of James Hall and Samuel Plimsoll than a new series of reforms. Their effect was that s.1 of the 1890 Act established a compulsory load-line, while s.1 of the 1892 Act said that a ship with a submerged load-line was unsafe and could properly be detained. S.459 of the 1894 Act laid down the procedure for actually detaining it and compelling a survey.² The load-line tables produced by Digby Murray for the Board of Trade and Benjamin Martell for Lloyd's in 1882 were revised by the Load Line Committee that began sitting in 1883, and given the force of law in 1890.³ The effect was immediate. The number of steamers registered rose by 10% in the decade 1890-1900, but the mean percentage of steamer losses fell from 2.12% to 1.41%.⁴ Similarly, the number of deaths by wreck, drowning and accident fell by 20% between 1891-1900.⁵ Two decades after Pimsoll's Act

1. 55 & 56 Vic c 37.

2. A vessel was provisionally detained for the purpose of survey, and then finally detained for repair, alteration or re-loading. Owners could appeal to a court of survey, and nominate assessors who would accompany the surveyor on his inspection.

3. Upham, The Load Line - A Hallmark of Safety 40-41.

4. See Appendix Thirteen.

5. See Appendix Eight (C),

came into force a downward trend in both types of losses is discernable for the first time, and it was a trend that was to continue for the remainder of the period studied if war losses are excluded from consideration.

On the debit side, there was a final attempt to implement the centuries-old policy of keeping up the number of young men going to sea so that the Navy could be fully manned in times of war. The 1894 Act re-stated earlier provisions relating to an intake of pauper apprentices,¹ while s.7 of the Merchant Shipping (Mercantile Marine Fund) Act of 1898 promised owners a 20% cut in the light dues paid by their vessels provided they took on seaman apprentices in the fifteen to nineteen age range and enrolled them in the Royal Naval Reserve.² Both moves failed, and the naval reserve recruitment scheme was wound up in 1906.³ The legislators had evidently not studied recent information on the matter. The truth was that premium apprentices, bound for the quarter-deck, had driven out seamen apprentices altogether. One reason was given by a contributor to the Nautical Magazine in 1882 who used the cognomen 'Twenty Years in Steamships'. The article

1. SS. 105-109.

2. 61 & 62 Vic c 44.

3. The number of apprentices fell from 1,861 in 1894 to 1,072 in 1903 - see Appendix Five. For the winding-up of the Royal Naval Reserve scheme see Hansard 4 142 700.

he wrote emphasised that owners got up to £60 in premiums for quarter-deck apprentices, and did not have to feed them in home ports because they went home to their families. On the other hand, 'poor boys could not go home'.¹ Another version was available in the Final Report of the Royal Commission on Loss of Life at Sea of 1887 which said categorically that seamen apprentices had ceased to exist because young men went to sea as boys or Ordinary Seamen, and were paid for it.² One fact is beyond dispute. The numbers of both types of apprentice had been falling steadily since the element of compulsion had been removed in mid-century, and subsequently many owners were not prepared to invest in training boys who might later go and work for someone else, while relatively few young men found a sea career attractive enough to seek a premium apprenticeship. By 1903 apprentices made up a mere 0.4% of the workforce - the lowest percentage ever recorded.³

In the matter of diet, it should be noted that Board of Trade officials did their best to make the 1892 Act work, while the shipowners were able, once again, to defer the institution of a statutory food scale. It will be recalled that s.3(1) of the 1892 Act had made

1. Nautical Magazine LI, November 1882. The article was entitled 'Dutchmen v. British Seamen'.

2. FRRCLLS 1887 xxvii.

3. See Appendices Three (iv) and Five.

the inspection of food and water mandatory on long voyages, and in the first year the Act was in force the Board of Trade inspectors did yeoman service. Between 17 July and 2 September 1893, for example, they made 273 inspections and there were ninety-six condemnations - a 35% condemnation rate.¹ Shipowners gradually conformed to the new standard,² but there continued to be no compulsion on them in respect of victualling on the shorter sea routes. A protest in 1902 from the Worcester branch of the Navy League to the effect that sub-standard food was being supplied to merchant seamen brought a reply from the Board of Trade that 'the question of the food supplied to seamen in the merchant service will probably be considered by the committee presently sitting'.³ This departmental committee⁴ subsequently recommended a voluntary food scale, but few shipowners felt that they had to adhere to it. When questioned in the House on 20 March 1905,

1. Hansard 4 17 738-739.

2. It was a grudging conformity, and Sir David Bone, writing at the end of a 140-day voyage in the late 1890s, noted that 'The food, poor in quality, and of meagre allowance at the best, has become doubly distasteful ... The fresh water had nearly run out, and the red rusty sediment of the tank bottoms has a nauseating effect and does little to assuage a thirst engendered by salt rations'. The Brassboulder 59-60.

3. PRO MT/9 720 M.4353/1902.

4. The Mercantile Marine Committee included Board of Trade, Shipping Federation, Trinity House and Sailor's and Firemen's Union representatives.

Bonar Law¹ had to admit that of the 3,647 British merchant ships on the register in 1904 only 340 had adopted the new voluntary scale.²

At the beginning of this chapter the four main aims of J. Havelock Wilson were listed, and it needs to be said that none of them was achieved in this period. He did not get recognition for the Sailor's and Firemen's Union, and disputes were still being settled by brute force. There was no statutory increase in the minimum scale of accommodation for seamen, and no statutory scale of provisions. The shipowners had a strong collective voice in the form of the Shipping Federation, and while the growing strength of the Liberal Party and the spread of socialist ideas meant that many radical suggestions were endorsed by Royal Commissions and Parliamentary and departmental committees, the follow-up rate was low. The unimplemented suggestions at the close of this period included abolition of imprisonment for breach of contract, qualifications for petty officers, firemen and Able Seamen, an increase in minimum accommodation standards, a statutory manning scale, a statutory food scale and increased representation of seamen on Local Marine Boards.

1. Andrew Bonar Law (1858-1923), was a Canadian-born Conservative who had prospered in the Glasgow iron trade. He led the party after 1911, and was briefly Prime Minister in 1922-23.

2. Hansard 4 143 429-430.

The conclusion must be that in these two decades of conflict the seamen manning the world's largest merchant fleet had made little material progress. Their lives were less at risk because of derivative legislation arising from an earlier reform movement, and crimps were less importunate because of executive action, but in other respects their living and working conditions remained largely unchanged.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE YEARS OF HOPE, 1905 TO 1918

Three factors underlie the improvement in the sailors' lot that took place between 1905 to 1918, and they are the Liberal victory at the polls in 1905, union successes in 1911-12 and the advent of the First World War. The merchant service of today was shaped in this period when sail virtually vanished from the seas and seamen obtained something close to parity with shore workers in respect of their conditions of employment. In looking at the improvements of these years, it is important to appreciate that while the reforming Liberals and the Sailors' and Firemen's Union were able to make advances of the ratchet type it was the demands of war that brought about radical change. As will be shown, the setting-up of the National Maritime Board, the institution of the P.C.5 system,¹ the employment 'pool' and the guaranteed minimum wage all sprang from a recognition that merchant seamen had a crucial role in supplying the sinews of war, and that without their efforts the conflict with Germany could well be lost.

1. A form designated Port Control 5 was devised so that seamen seeking work had a type of security clearance. J. Havelock Wilson was able to tie in the issue and completion of this form with the issue and inspection of union cards, and thus achieve a kind of 'closed shop'.

The legislative phase attendant on the Liberal victory of 1905 antedated the achievement of power by some months, and began with the passing of the Shipowners Negligence (Remedies) Act of 1905.¹

This measure was conceived by Sir Harry Samuel, the Member for Tower Hamlets, as a retributive exercise because foreign governments were claiming jurisdiction in respect of personal injury suffered by their nationals unloading British ships abroad, but the background to it stretches back a quarter of a century. In Chapters Five and Six it was shown that the Employers' Liability Act of 1880 had been of little use in securing compensation for injured seamen, and the same may be said of the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1897. The 1897 Act was admittedly 'experimental':² it failed to give realistic payments to those killed at work,³ and a Home Office enquiry in 1904 concluded that it had engendered 'excessive litigation' because a high degree of negligence had to be proved.⁴ The 1904 enquiry report urged that 'powers should be given providing an attachment of a foreign ship to answer a claim',⁵ and this recommendation

1. 5 Edw 7 c 10.

2. See Hansard 4 48 1432-1433.

3. A wholly dependent relative might get the maximum payment of £150 or three years' wages - whichever was the greater.

4. Report of the Departmental Committee on Compensation for Injuries to Workmen, BPP 1904 (Cmd.2208) LXXXVIII 753.

5. BPP 1904 LXXXVIII 843.

was the cornerstone of Sir Harry Samuel's Bill. John Burns, the veteran socialist leader, supported the Bill because it gave the power of detention and thus made proper provision for enforcement,¹ and the same principle was embodied in s.11 of the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1906² and meant that British ships could also be detained pending the settlement of a claim. Section 7 of the 1906 Act also gave British seamen the unequivocal right to compensation for 'personal injury by accident arising out of and in the course of employment'.³ The arguments that were used by the employers in relation to the issue of workmen's compensation were simplistic in the extreme, with a Glasgow Shipowners Circular of 2 May 1906 saying that, in the first place, injuries on shipboard were acts of God, and if they could not be so classed, and anyone was responsible at all, it should be the state who paid up. The union line was that there .

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1. Hansard 4 142 326-345. Second Reading debate on 3 March 1905.
 2. 6 Edw 7 c 58.
 3. The definition of an 'accident' had been established by Lord Shand's judgement in Fenton v. Thorley & Co. (1903) A.C. 443 as 'any unexpected personal injury resulting to the workman in the course of his employment from any unlooked-for mishap or occurrence'. The key words in this phrase are 'workman' and 'in the course of his employment', for there were many subsequent legal actions where it was claimed that, for example, ships' officers were not 'workmen' and accidents between ship and shore when berthed alongside were not 'in the course of employment'.

was no essential difference between workers at sea and on land, that surgeons were rarely carried in merchant ships so that many injuries were untreated¹ and that the existing Shipping Federation Benefit Fund was inadequate.² The union pamphlet stating their case³ attempted to draw a comparison between the risks run by miners and seamen, but failed to make the essential point that the industrial accident rate was between four and six times higher at sea than down the mines.⁴ The Workmen's Compensation Act of 1906 proved to be reasonably efficient in providing compensation for disabling accidents at work, but was less effective where the cause was not directly work-related,⁵ or when death ensued.

J. Havelock Wilson had followed the practice of tabling questions on deaths by accident aboard ship

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1. Surgeons were only carried in foreign-going ships with more than a hundred persons on board and emigrant ships.
 2. The death grant was £25, while injured men got a maximum benefit of ten shillings a week for thirteen weeks.
 3. Edmund Cathery, Workmen's Compensation Bill, 1906. Cathery was the general secretary of the Sailors' and Firemen's Union, and a copy of the pamphlet may be seen in the BLRD under reference Cup. 600 b. 1 43.
 4. The 1904 figures collected by the Home Office showed that seamen mean deaths were 64.5 per 10,000 employed and the mean death rate for miners was 12.9 per 10,000 - see BPP 1904 LXXXVIII 977. This gives five times as many deaths at sea compared to deaths underground, and Appendix Eight (D) gives comparable figures on a decennial basis.
 5. For example, death or disability caused by disease was not covered until the case of the Dover Navigation Co. v. Isabella Craig (1940) A.C. 190 established that a seaman who died of yellow fever in West Africa had contracted the disease 'in the course of his employment'.

for many years,¹ and was one of the Members who called for the regular publication of statistics about death or injury payments following the passing of the Workmen's Compensation Act. Insofar as deaths were concerned, the Act was shown to have limited impact, for in 1908 when 999 seamen died from accident only in 371 cases was compensation paid. In 1910 there were 1,053 deaths in this category, and compensation was paid in 456 cases. A threefold reason was given for this state of affairs: that many men had no dependents, that foreign dependents were not aware of their rights and that some deaths were not 'in the course of employment'.² When it was suggested to the House that steps be taken to publicise the right of compensation abroad so that more foreign dependents might claim, the Home Secretary declined to comply.³ The figures for disablement compensation paid between 1909 and 1913 appear in Table Five, and it may be seen that the take-up rose to a plateau of about 8,000 cases a year while the compensation figure stabilised at about £13 a man. There were no payments in respect of industrial disease cases involving seamen prior to the outbreak of World War One, and where

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1. On 13 April 1899, for example, he tabled questions on the deaths of John Mallom and George Withers, seamen killed by accidents with mooring wires - Hansard 4 69 987.
 2. Statistics of Compensation, BPP 1909 (Cd.4894) LXXX 954 and BPP 1911 (Cd.5896) LXXV 748-749.
 3. He was the Rt. Hon. H.J. Gladstone, and the exchange took place on 5 November 1909. See Hansard 5 12 2251.

TABLE FIVE: Compensation for Disability.¹

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Cases</u>	<u>Average Compensation</u>
1909	6,701	£10-13s
1910	7,544	£11-6s
1911	8,109	£12-4s
1912	8,301	£13-11s
1913	8,191	£13-6s

compensation was paid for the death of a seamen it averaged £160 - about the same as the figure shown earlier as the maximum payment under the provisions of the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1897.

The Merchant Shipping Act of 1906² had been originally envisaged by Arthur Balfour³ and Bonar Law was an improvemental measure, and was initially narrowly based on the recommendations of the Departmental Committee on Shipping Law published in 1905.⁴ It was proposed, for example, to tidy up arrangements for dealing with the wages of deserters, clear up ambiguities that had arisen over the repatriation of distressed seamen and rationalise arrangements for securing a passage home for men who

1. Statistics of Compensation, BPP 1914 (Cd.7088) LXXX 1060 and BPP 1914-16 (Cd.7669) LXI 996.

2. 6 Edw 7 c 48.

3. Arthur James Balfour (1848-1930), was Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party in 1902-05 in succession to his uncle, Lord Salisbury. He is now chiefly remembered for the Balfour Declaration which led to the establishment of the state of Israel when the British Mandate in Palestine came to an end.

4. Report of the Departmental Committee on Shipping Law, BPP 1905 (334) LXXI 179.

had signed-on abroad. However, the first debate in the House of Lords on 31 March 1905¹ was the occasion for a move by Lord Muskerry, chiefly for reasons of pique,² to make amendments relating to an increase in living space for merchant seamen, improved ventilation of living quarters, more light, insulation from bare metal, the provision of messrooms for meals and bathrooms. The Bill hung fire: a standing committee was appointed, and with the change to a Liberal government at the end of the year a great number of additional clauses accumulated. Some of them were blatantly special pleading - as with J. Havelock Wilson's endeavour to legislate that one lascar in every five should be English-speaking,³ and failed, but Lloyd George⁴ and his supporters transformed the Bill into a reforming measure by including many long overdue improvements in

1. Hansard 4 144 8-10.

2. He had tried to get the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board Bill through in 1904, but it failed to reach the statute book and he acknowledged freely in the House that his amendments to the 1905 Merchant Shipping Bill were of a disruptive nature.

3. Report of the Standing Committee on the Merchant Shipping Act Amendment (No.2) Bill, BPP 1906 XI (202) 58. (Referred to hereafter as RSCMSAAB 1906).

4. David Lloyd George (1863-1945), was MP for Caernarvon from 1890 to 1945, and President of the Board of Trade in 1905-1906. Prime Minister from 1916-1922, the great Liberal statesman's finest achievement was his National Insurance Act of 1911 that remains the foundation stone of Britain's welfare state.

the lot of seamen. The 1906 Act brought in the first statutory scale of provisions,¹ and certification of cooks in foreign-going ships of over 1,000 tons,² and the right to repatriation when service ended abroad.³ Lloyd George, who is often said to have been the brightest star in the Campbell-Bannerman administration, forced through the last-mentioned provision with great vigour, and was also personally involved in framing s.64 (1) which gave seamen 120 cubic feet (fifteen superficial feet) of living space, as recommended by the Royal Commission on Labour in 1894.⁴ Another part of the Act where the hand of Lloyd George can be detected is s.61 which provided that men signing-on be asked about any allotment notes recorded in their names. The purpose was to combat crimps and 'sisters' who tried to profit from forgery and signatures obtained by threat or blandishment.⁵ As a sop to Wilson and the Sailors'

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1. S.25(1). The First Schedule to the Act has details, and the new diet scale is reproduced as Appendix Eleven (I).
 2. S.27.
 3. S.32. This provided that when a man signed-on in the United Kingdom ends his service abroad he is entitled to his full wages, a certificate of discharge and his passage home. It did not apply to foreign seamen engaged abroad and paid-off abroad.
 4. See RSCMSAAB 1906 78 for Lloyd George's part in this piece of legislation: recommendations are at FFRRCL 1894 iii.
 5. Mercantile Marine Offices, where most signing-on took place, had doorkeepers who would exclude known crimps and hangers-on from the room where crews were engaged. If a man was sober enough to know what he was doing, questions about a dubious allotment note entered on the agreement might alert him to the fact that he was being duped by his former host, or companion.

and Firemen's Union, s.12 provided that no seaman be signed-on unless he had sufficient knowledge of English to 'understand the necessary orders' but, significantly, lascars, British subjects and British-protected persons were exempt under this heading. The 'hazeing' of men to desert so that their wages need not be paid was brought abruptly to an end by s.43 which made it a misdemeanour, punishable with up to two years' imprisonment, to force a seaman on shore, while s.34 said that the expenses of sick and injured seamen were the owners' responsibility - except where the sickness or injury was attributable to venereal disease, misbehaviour or default.¹ The penalty for failing to join a ship after cashing an advance note became a £5 fine,² but the alternative was still a prison sentence - a maximum of twenty-one days. Finally, ss.1 and 2 of the 1906 Act ensured that foreign ships had to conform to British load-line legislation while in British jurisdiction, and s.7 did away with a legal loophole whereby coasting steamers of less than eighty tons had been exempt from having load-line markings.

An objective appraisal of the ranking of these reforms must give pride of place to the institution

1. The Merchant Shipping (Mercantile Marine Fund) Act of 1898 had covered injured, but not sick, seamen in respect of hospital care and repatriation, and an internal Board of Trade enquiry in 1905 had recommended extension to sick seamen. See BPP 1905 LXXI 184.

2. S.65(1).

of the statutory dietary scale, and an examination of Appendix Eleven will reveal how radical the change really was. Appendix Eleven (F) has the Liverpool Scale, which represents the lowest common denominator in nutritional terms and was the widest-employed victualling scale in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and it will be seen that it is inferior in many respects to the Royal Navy scale of 1785 - as at (A). The monotony of the seaman's diet can be appreciated from (B) and (D) where the basic daily alternation is from salt pork and pea soup one day to salt beef and duff the next. More enlightened owners, such as the African Steamship Company (E) and Money Wigram and Sons (G), had the usual 1½lbs of salt meat as the daily mainstay, but tried to ring the changes with vegetables and dried fruit. The Board of Trade scale of 1867-68 (H) suggested similar additions to the basic diet, but the quantities involved were minute. Quarter-pounds of butter or suet, raisins or dried apples, weekly are mere token amounts when compared to the bulk of salt meat and hard biscuit consumed. The statutory scale of 1906 (I) cut the salt meat element by half, brought in fresh food in the form of potatoes in sufficient quantity to serve them up each day,¹ and provided infinitely more variety. For example, the weekly diet from 1906 onwards

1. Fresh potatoes had to be provided for the first eight weeks of any voyage commencing at a Home Trade port between September and May. See the First Schedule to the 1906 Act.

contained twenty items of solid food: the Liverpool Scale had four, and the Money Wigram scale - the best of the company diets - had a mere eight. However, the enforcement of the scale proved to be more difficult than the legislators and officials had envisaged.

The question of a statutory dietary scale had been under discussion for some forty years prior to the passing of the 1906 Act,¹ and as shipowners had always taken the line that 'usage governs rations'² it was apparent that machinery for enforcement would be required.³ The regular and statutory inspection of food and water had begun in a modest way with s.3 of the 1892 Act which provided for an inspection of food and water supplied to ships making long voyages, and the 1894 Act embodied, in s.206, the same concept.⁴ S.26 of the 1906

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1. The Seamen's Parliamentary Committee, based at Liverpool, had urged that a compulsory diet scale be introduced in a letter to Board of Trade dated 6 February 1868 - see PRO MT/9 40 M.2495/1868.
 2. Lindsay, History of Merchant Shipping and Ancient Commerce ii 494.
 3. The Shipping Federation had brought out a diet scale in 1893 to counter J. Havelock Wilson's Seamen's Provisions Bill, but most owners reverted to the 'pound and pint' diet as given in Appendix Eleven (F) when the threat of a statutory scale was removed.
 4. It was a concept that had been bitterly resisted by T.H. Farrer, the dominant civil servant at the Board of Trade for almost forty years. Farrer had set his face against statutory food scales and inspection, and in a departmental minute dated 6 December 1866 had declared 'I am against any attempt to determine provisions by law - and the less inspection the better'. (PRO MT/9 25 M.1354/1866). The 1892 legislation was not drafted until after his departure from the Board.

Act went further in providing for the inspection of food and water in any British ship, and a Chief Inspector of Ships' Provisions had the responsibility of enforcing both pieces of legislation. Insofar as individual ships were concerned, these inspections had the effect of pushing down the percentage of rejected packages of stores from around 3% to 1.2% between 1908 and 1914,¹ although bulk store² examination had less impact. It seems evident from the figures that suppliers had, since 1892, been able to adjust the quality of goods to fit new minima, and the annual reports of the Chief Inspector of Ships' Provisions confirm that this is the case. The highest individual rejection rates relate to tinned milk and preserved meat, for it is blown and rusty tins - old stock that has been long in store - that is now being supplied for the use of seamen, and the classic type of condemnation involving weevils in the biscuit and overaged salt beef is on the decline.³ One weakness of the system

1. See Appendix Fourteen

2. Food supplied to sailing vessels and steamers in the long-distance trade came under this category, and examination was in respect of the 1892 and 1894 Acts. Individual ships were inspected under the 1906 Act, although coasters where men provided their own food were exempt. All inspections were by arrangement and notice had to be given, so that a 2% or 3% rejection rate is surprising in the circumstances and tends to suggest that the food supplied for consumption by seamen was near the end of what we would call today its 'shelf life'.

3. See the Annual reports of the Chief Inspector of Ships' Provisions, PRO MT/9 1082.

was that these 'field executives', as Oliver MacDonagh terms them,¹ conducted their inspections ashore in Britain before stores were loaded, and there was no inspection when ships were re-victualled in foreign countries. The result was that supplies obtained abroad continued to be sub-standard. Geoffrey Rawson, serving in the Inversnaid in 1907, reports that 'the rascally contractors naturally put on board the lowest quality meat and biscuits',² and Sidney Sandford recalls joining a ship in 1909 armed with a mallet and canvas bag for breaking up ship's biscuits to make 'dandyfunk' and 'crackerhash' from 'Liverpool Pantiles' as in the pre-1906 era.³ The reason why owners were able to continue to supply largely traditional foods lay in previous legislation. Section 199 of the 1894 Act said that if food 'could not be procured or supplied in proper quantities ... equivalent substitutes ... (be)... supplied in lieu thereof'. The 1906 Act spelled out the nature of these 'equivalent substitutes',⁴ and the consequence was that on long voyages - particularly

1. MacDonagh, A Pattern of Government Growth 1800-60 332.

2. Rawson, Sea Prelude 105.

3. I. Moass, 'Memories of Sail and Steam' Sea Breezes Vol. 51 No. 380 491, August 1977. 'Dandyfunk' was broken biscuit baked with jam or marmalade and 'crackerhash' the savoury version seasoned with salt meat. 'Liverpool Pantiles' were so named because they were said to be hard enough to use as roofing tiles.

4. In the First Schedule to the 1906 Act.

in sailing ships - the diet of seamen could, quite legally, revert to the old stand-bys of salt meat, biscuit, dried peas and coffee. The only consolation for the man concerned was that a compensation payment of from fourpence to a shilling a day might be paid in addition to his wages.¹ Food provided for the use of seamen was, until the 1920s, labelled as such and was not available to other consumers,² and there was no inspection abroad unless three or more crew members complained under the legal provision first established in 1844.³

Two other reforms brought about by the passage of the 1906 Act were similarly flawed. The increase in living space to fifteen superficial or 120 cubic feet applied only to European seamen, with lascars and Asiatic seamen having to accept a much lower standard. Section 64 of the 1906 Act specifically excluded these men from the legislation, and their minimum standard of accommodation remained subject to Indian law. India Act XXVIII of 1850 had given them only four superficial feet, and India Act IV of 1875 added a minimum height in fo'c's'les of four feet, six inches. India Act XIII

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1. However, s.199(2)(c) said that if provisions 'could not be procured' - as would be the case in an extended voyage - a Court could reduce or refuse compensation 'as the justice of the case requires'.
 2. For a description of 'crew' provisions see Alan Villiers, The Set of The Sails (1974 edition) 81.
 3. Subsequently codified in S.198 of the 1894 Act.

of 1876 increased living space to six superficial or thirty-six cubic feet, but it was not until 1933 that they achieved twelve superficial or seventy-two cubic feet - the area given to British seamen in 1867.¹ Of course, area is not a perfect yardstick by itself,² and decent standards of accommodation for British seamen were not agreed until 1917 when Ministry of Shipping, Shipping Federation and union officials made a joint declaration about accommodation in new standardised vessels. Thereafter, it was promised, new ships would provide accommodation for seaman aft rather than in a fo'c's'le, with two-bunked cabins, a crew smokeroom and a mess-room for meals.³ Lloyd George's action in respect of allotment notes (s.61) proved to be ineffective in checking the issue of fictitious notes for the benefit of crimps,⁴ and a re-examination

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1. By India Act XXV of 1933, s.4, and the Merchant Shipping Act 1867, s.9. See Chapter Five for the history of the last-named Act.
 2. Particularly when space is occupied by a large number of people. For example, the master of the Childwickbury wrote with pride to the Registrar-General of Seamen in 1864 to say that twenty men lived in a fo'c's'le measuring twenty-six feet by twenty-six feet and that they had an ample allowance in cubic feet. Translated into shore terms, it meant that twenty men were living for months on end in the space occupied by two sitting-rooms in a twentieth-century house. BPP 1865 L 298.
 3. See The Shipping World LVII 1,260 62, 25 July 1917.
 4. Crimps had turned to the use of allotment notes between 1880 and 1889 when advance notes were banned - see Chapter Six - and found that small, but regular, sums paid monthly to a female confederate were as good a source of income as a once-and-for-all settlement on an advance note.

of the problem led to new legislation in 1911 to increase the percentage of pay that could be allotted to genuine dependents and shorten the payment interval. However, before dealing with this measure and three other Acts passed in the immediate pre-war period, it is necessary to describe the break-through achieved by the Sailors' and Firemen's Union in 1911-12 and the new relationship with the employers' organisation that emerged.

In Chapter Six it was shown that the Sailors' and Firemen's Union followed a non-confrontation policy after 1893 and concentrated on building up the branch structure and membership. J. Havelock Wilson took the view that long-term gains were contingent on securing recognition from the employers and being in a position to bargain on level terms, and between 1911-12 he achieved this aim. The coming into effect of the Trade Disputes Act in 1906 and the growing international trend in the labour movement stiffened his resolve considerably, for while the latter encouraged labour leaders to hope for advance through concerted action in a number of countries the former ensured that unions, and their funds, were protected when strike and picket tactics were employed. Following its defeat in 1893, the Sailors' and Firemen's Union under Wilson's direction had concentrated on securing a strong base in the ports, and when that had been achieved Wilson toured Europe and America in 1909 and 1910 to obtain promises of support from the unions in seven nations - the United States,

Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Holland and Belgium. This move was in emulation of the employers' organisation, the Shipping Federation, which in 1907 had set up the International Shipping Federation to strengthen its interests and co-ordinate activity world-wide. The 1911 strike had, therefore, a national and an international aspect, and the latter may be dealt with quite briefly. International co-operation quite failed to materialize, and in the words of the historian of the Shipping Federation 'fizzled out almost before it had started'.¹ The German seamen won an immediate increase in wages and withdrew: the remaining national unions gave only lukewarm support. At home, the aims of the strike insofar as the men were concerned were seen to be the achievement of £5-10s a month in cargo ships, £6 a month in liners and 35/- a week in coasters,² other issues such as a manning scale, fixed hours of work, overtime, part-wages when on board in port and better accommodation took second place. As the struggle developed, emphasis began to be laid on the abolition of the practice of signing-on in Shipping Federation offices and the physical possession of Continuous Certificates of Discharge. Wilson had a poor view of the staff in Mercantile Marine Offices,³

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1. Powell, The Shipping Federation 21. A parallel may be drawn with the failure of the international socialist movement to halt the march to war in 1914 by means of a general strike. Nationalism and self-interest proved stronger than international class solidarity.
 2. Matthew Swainston 'Merchant Seamen' 233.
 3. See, My Stormy Voyage Through Life 77.

but was perfectly well aware that the achievement of his primary aim - a union presence when men signed-on - could be more easily attained in premises controlled by the Board of Trade¹ and was prepared to tackle the Shipping Federation in the first instance and leave the Board for another day.

So much for the issues; now for the strike and its aftermath. It began in mid-June 1911 after a series of local stoppages of a partial nature, and the dockers were soon out in sympathy. Cardiff had been one of the earliest ports to be disrupted and Edward Tupper,² recruited by Wilson in 1910 and soon to be made the union's national organiser, played a leading part in bringing the men out. He initiated mobile pickets at Cardiff and Swansea, secured the sympathy of the railway workers so that 'free labour' could not easily be imported and got union members to lodge their Continuous Certificates of Discharge with union officials - nominally as a gesture of solidarity, but actually to prevent them signing-on at the temporarily enhanced rates being paid by shipowners. After five weeks the Cardiff seamen secured a local agreement for a

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1. Although originally established under the aegis of Local Marine Boards by ss. 7 and 35 of the 1850 Act, staff were paid by the Board of Trade from 1854, and in 1911 were wholly under central government control.
 2. Nothing is known of his early life: he claimed to be a master mariner, but no certificate in this name can be traced. Active in union affairs until 1936, he died in 1942. His biography, Seamen's Torch, published in 1938, is here used as the principal source document for the 1911 strike.

£5 a month wage, for the Shipping Federation had failed, for the first time in its short existence, to recruit, transport and supply sufficient non-union labour to man the ships of its members.¹ At Southampton, the Olympic was due to sail on her maiden transatlantic voyage when the seamen and firemen struck for higher wages and her owners, the White Star Line, gave way almost at once for reasons of prestige and so as to maintain the service in the face of fierce competition from Liverpool-based liner companies. Seeing this success, the workforce of all the other passenger lines and most of the cargo companies walked out, and after a fortnight the owners conceded the wage claim.² Edward Tupper had gone on to Liverpool after the Cardiff settlement, and with the assistance of Tom Mann and the dockers won a substantial increase in wages. Local settlements followed at many other ports, for the owners had lost unity just as the port workers had achieved it, and 'in port after port they (the owners) climbed down and

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1. Solidarity among different classes of workers had been virtually absent in 1889-93, but was a feature in 1911. Tom Mann and Ben Tillett called sympathy strikes of port workers in Southampton, Hull, Manchester, Liverpool and Cardiff, and Joseph Cotter brought out members of his Cooks and Stewards Union. The railwaymen were sympathetic, although they did not strike, and Tupper even managed to subvert Shipping Federation employees on depot ships. This new unity led to the famous 'Red Sunday' at Liverpool which persuaded employers there that a settlement was essential.
 2. See the Southampton Times for 10, 17 and 24 June 1911, 5 August 1911 and 30 December 1911.

granted the sailors large increases in wages'.¹ The Hull dispute was notable for the first intervention by the Board of Trade in an official conciliatory capacity, and at other East Coast ports agreement was reached between seamen and shipowners' associations with George Askwith countersigning for the Board.² The settlement on the Tyne had the interesting consequence that the Sailors' and Firemen's Union won grudging recognition from the Executive Council of the Shipping Federation as a bona fide and representative organisation, and the situation by the beginning of 1912 was that wages were standardised on a port-by-port basis, seamen were no longer compelled to hold the Federation ticket and discrimination against union members had virtually ceased.³ It was an armistice rather than a victory for

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1. G.D.H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, The Common People 1746-1946 (1971 edition) 487.
 2. Although described somewhat dismissively by G.D.H. Cole and Raymond Postgate as an 'overworked civil servant', George Ranken Askwith was, in fact, chairman of the Fair Wages Advisory Committee from 1909 and Chief Industrial Commissioner at the Board of Trade from 1911-19. His book, Industrial Problems and Disputes (1920), contains, in chapter sixteen, a personal account of the Hull dispute.
 3. The exact phrase used in the Executive Council resolution of 17 November 1911 was 'recognition of the Seamen's Union should be based upon freedom of contract and the employment of union or non-union seamen and firemen'. The reason for this concession was that the Shipping Federation ticket was devalued because the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1906 had, in Swainston's words, 'struck a mortal blow at the Shipping Federation Benefit Fund'. The death benefit of £25 from the latter fund compared poorly with the £160 average payment under the Act. See Swainston 'Merchant Seamen' 225.

either side, but the major development arising from the 1911 strike was the change in the role of the Shipping Federation. It ceased to be primarily a strike-breaking organisation,¹ and gradually adopted a training role. The process had already begun as a result of the 1906 Act² and it accelerated with the passing years as the Federation established Sea Training Schools in various parts of the country for firemen, deckhands and catering personnel.³ The new relationship between the employers' organisation and the union was that the former was to have the initial selection of would-be recruits to sea employment, give them elementary training, weed out misfits and check any tendency to 'deterioration', while the latter signed-up those thus qualified for sea service and enforced a de facto 'closed shop'.

Four pieces of legislation passed during the last years of peace require comment. The first of them, the Merchant Shipping (Seamen's Allotment) Act of 1911,⁴ was Board of Trade-sponsored and went through without amendment.⁵ Its preamble shows the purpose, for the

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1. It did, of course, break the 1925 strike by traditional methods, and used them for the last time in the General Strike of 1926.
 2. Federation-financed cookery schools were set up at Belfast, Cardiff, Glasgow, Hull, North Shields, Southampton and Sunderland as a consequence of the s.27 provision in the 1906 Act that ships' cooks be certificated.
 3. Of which the Gravesend Sea School, founded in 1918, is the best known.
 4. 1 & 2 Geo 5 c 28.
 5. Report from Standing Committee A on the Merchant Shipping (Seamen's Allotment) Bill, BPP 1911 (97) VII 549. (RSCAMSSAB 1911 hereafter).

opening words are 'whereas doubts have arisen as to the interpretation of s.141 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894 and s.62 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1906 ...' and the enactment permitted, by ss.1(a) and 1(b), the allotment of more than half wages¹ and the payment of allotments at weekly intervals.² This useful measure greatly reduced the financial burden on seamen's families - particularly after the beginning of a voyage when resources tended to be lowest at home after a period of unemployment. A similarly-sponsored measure in 1914 brought the certification of ships' officers more directly under central government control. The 1894 Act had continued to allow Local Marine Boards to examine candidates for certificates of competency at the seaports, subject only to Board of Trade supervision,³ but the Merchant Shipping (Certificates) Act of 1914⁴ gave the Board power to hold examinations anywhere, and to have complete control over them. Third, mention must be made of s.48 of the National Insurance Act of 1911 which set up a special, comprehensive, insurance scheme for seafarers. It was negotiated by Lloyd George, the Treasury and the Shipowners Parliamentary Committee, and for the first time since the demise of the Merchant Seamen's

1. Previously, by s.141(2) of the 1894 Act, a man could only allot half of his wages.

2. S.62 of the 1906 Act had said: 'payment ... shall begin ... one month from the date of the agreement with the crew and ... be paid at the expiration of every subsequent month'. These delays in receiving allotments were a source of great hardship to the families of seamen on long voyages.

3. S.94 of the 1894 Act.

4. 4 & 5 Geo 5 c 45.

Fund in the 1850s¹ there was provision for benefit in respect of sickness and disablement financed by state and employee contributions. Most important of all, the Seamen's National Insurance Society took over the care of sick and disabled seamen when the obligations of owners ceased.² The last relevant enactment in this immediate pre-war era was passed as a direct result of the Titanic disaster of 1912, and it had the effect of greatly increasing the use of wireless by shipping,³ with a consequent improvement in the crew death statistics.

The Report on the Loss of the S.S. Titanic⁴ embodied a number of recommendations which were subsequently discussed at the International Convention for

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1. As described in Chapter Three.
 2. S.34 of the 1906 Act had said that, except in cases where disability arose from venereal disease, default or misbehaviour, the cost of 'surgical and medical advice, and attendance and medicine, and ... maintenance ... until (the seaman) is cured, or dies, or is returned to a proper return port ... shall be defrayed by the owner'. As the obligation of the owner ceased when a 'proper home port' had been reached, the operation of the Seamen's National Insurance Society benefit scheme was an essential element in restoring a sick or disabled man to health.
 3. The Report of the Berlin Radiotelegraphic Convention Inter-Departmental Committee of 1906 had showed that, up to that date, the use of wireless was, for all practical purposes, confined to passenger liners and cross-Channel steamers - see PRO MT/9 812 M. 3392/07.
 4. BPP 1912-13 (Cd.6352) LXXVI 541.

the Safety of Life at Sea held in London in 1914. The signatories, including all the major maritime powers, pledged themselves to bring in a wide range of safety measures - of which the most noteworthy was the implementation of recommendation twenty of the Titanic Report calling for the installation of wireless in all large sea-going vessels. Britain's response was the introduction by John Burns, the veteran socialist who had just become President of the Board of Trade, of the Merchant Shipping (Convention) Bill in June 1914. In the House, the validity of the main safety provisions was not contested,¹ but a clause seen to be leading to further state intervention in the shipping industry was queried and debated. Section 18 - as it became - provided for the issue of safety certificates in respect of ships carrying wireless and with more than fifty crew on board, and was thought by some members to signal the introduction of a manning scale by bureaucratic action. To the owners, the introduction of safety certificates, necessitating annual compulsory surveys, hinted at a possible refusal of certificates by reason of undermanning, while a reformer - Sir Frederick Banbury, Member for the City of London - enquired bluntly whether the Board would 'put in a clause that for every vessel

1. Briefly, they were that icebergs and derelicts be reported, that British foreign-going ships with more than fifty crew should be fitted with wireless, and that a percentage of the crew should hold lifeboat certificates so that they could handle small boats following shipwreck.

for so many tons shall carry not less than a certain number of men?' Banbury wanted a 'skeleton scale' of manning,¹ and while J.M. Robertson, Parliamentary Secretary at the Board of Trade, refused to be drawn over this point he acknowledged that the Bill 'gave the Board of Trade power to make regulations as to manning' and indicated that the Board had a Merchant Shipping Bill 'in preparation'.² No such draft Bill can now be traced, and in any case the coming of war put an end to the possibility of allotting Parliamentary time for a Bill dealing with the manning of merchant ships. The real importance of the Merchant Shipping (Convention) Act of 1914³ is that it had a dramatic impact on crew deaths at sea. Excluding war casualties, it can be said the Act halved the figures, for the average annual number of crew deaths fell from 825 in 1911-15 to 385 in 1916-20.⁴ The latter figure is all the more convincing when compared to that for the longer period from 1896-1915. The mean annual figure for these twenty years is 781 - still double that for the 1916-20 period, and the improvement in lives saved took place at a time when the mean number of steamship losses, excluding war casualties, increased by about 10%.⁵

1. Hansard 5 63 687-689.

2. Hansard 5 63 688.

3. 4 & 5 Geo 5 c 50.

4. See Appendix Thirteen (B).

5. See Appendix Thirteen (A) and (B).

Wireless distress calls and lifeboat expertise were ensuring that the seaman was less at risk when his ship was endangered.¹

In 1915 three factors were beginning to operate in such a way as to bring about further improvement in the sailors' lot. First, the wave of patriotic fervour accompanying the outbreak of war had led a number of seamen to enlist thus reducing the workforce considerably,² and second the government itself had distorted the normal price mechanism by chartering large numbers of British merchant ships and paying their crews a flat £1 a month increased wages.³ Third, there was inflation with a sharp rise in food prices: the demand for shipping was acute and the charter rates of

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1. Nevertheless, seafaring continued to be 'among the most hazardous of occupations'. In Chapter Ten of his book entitled Foc's'le and Glory-Hole (1974 edition), James C. Healey emphasises that in the 1920s and 1930s seamen continued to have a high death rate when compared to other workers because they were at the place of work for the full twenty-four hours and always 'exposed to danger from fire, collision, explosion or shipwreck'. Foc's'le and Glory-Hole 103 and 112.
 2. Swainston believed that the workforce fell by 15% between 1914 and 1915 for this reason - see his 'Merchant Seamen' 240.
 3. A policy followed by Walter Runciman (1870-1949), who succeeded John Burns at the Board of Trade in 1914. A Liberal shipowner, and the son of Walter Runciman whose book, Before the Mast - and After was referred to in Chapter Four, he is said to have 'rendered conspicuous service to the State as a master of both the strategy and tactics of economic warfare' in his DNB entry. However, his judgement in this instance may not have been sound because flat-rate increases of this kind were a recipe for future discord.

unrequisitioned vessels rose four-fold.¹ In the next two years a patchwork of local wage increases began to overlay the pre-war wage structure, and the government was compelled to make further payments to seafarers because of war conditions. The diversion of ships due to the adoption of the convoy system led to the payment of seamen's railway fares from discharge port to home port, while the loss of clothing and effects when ships were mined or torpedoed was met by a government grant. The deep-sea Able Seaman's wage rose from its peacetime average of £5-10s a month to £8-10s a month, and when America entered the war the pressure on wages increased because the American rate stood at around £18 a month. A series of local stoppages in 1917, due in the main to price rises, engaged the full attention of the Sailors' and Firemen's Union, the Shipping Federation and the Ministry of Shipping, and led after very little discussion to the establishment of a National Maritime Board for the industry.² It was a time of unease at home,³ and the war was not going well,⁴ so that the owners and the union were, uniquely, in accord. Wilson's

1. See PRO MT/9 1125 M.1218/1917.

2. Report on the work of the National Maritime Board, 1917-19, BPP 1920 (Cmd.545) XXI 640. (Referred to hereafter as RWNMB 1917-19)

3. A Commission of Enquiry was appointed to deal with the problem, and the Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest, BPP 1917-18 (Cd. 8662) XV 1 will be referred to hereafter as RCEIU 1917-18.

4. The Lloyds rate of insurance against war risks rose to 10% a month or 25% for a three months' voyage in a war zone - see PRO MT/9 1128 M.34479/1917.

Sailors' and Firemen's Union has disassociated itself from the National Transport Workers Federation for patriotic reasons, while the Shipping Federation had so far forgotten its individualistic creed as to participate in the work of the Inter-Allied Chartering Committee which arranged a central control of chartering neutral ships and which, hitherto, had been a source of much individual profit.¹ Under the chairmanship of Sir Leo Chiozza Money,² Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Shipping, the Board held its first meetings in November 1917.

The first matter to be settled was wages. A national pay scale was announced which gave Able Seamen £11-10s a month, a fireman £12, Chief Engineers about £33 a month and the master of a twelve-thousand ton ship between £50 and £58 a month.³ A comparison with other occupations follows. In 1917 agricultural workers had just achieved a minimum weekly wage of twenty-five shillings,⁴ so that the Able Seaman was more than twice

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1. This committee was set up by an Order in Council of 10 January 1917.
 2. Leo (George) Chiozza Money (1870-1944), was Italian-born and assumed the surname of Money in 1903. MP for Northants East and Paddington North from 1906-18, he disappeared from public life abruptly when it was revealed that he was associating with a Hyde Park prostitute. For a full list of his official posts see Who Was Who, 1941-1950 edition.
 3. See Appendix Fifteen (D) for engineers' wage rates in 1918. The rate for masters of the largest ships was not agreed until 17 April 1919, but the award was back-dated to November 1917 - see RWNMB 1917-19 675.
 4. The Corn Production Act of 1917 had created an Agricultural Wages Board which determined the 25/- minimum wage.

as well paid as the man on the land. Further, the pre-war wage ratio had been 11:8 in the seaman's favour so that the wage differential had increased from about 27% in 1912-13 to almost 60% in 1917.¹ An Able Seaman in the Royal Navy with three years' service was getting £38-0-5d a year at this time (£3-3s-4d a month)² and a private soldier in the trenches a mere shilling a day (£1-10s-5d a month).³ The ratio, therefore, in respect of merchant seamen, naval seamen and private soldiers wages was 23:6:3, while for merchant seamen and agricultural labourers it was 23:11. High wages for merchant seamen in wartime were no novelty,⁴ but this time the fall that invariably accompanied a return to peacetime conditions was delayed and of lesser effect,⁵ although the 1930s slump did bring about a

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1. The ABs average pre-war wage had been £5-10s a month, while that for agricultural labourers in England and Wales was £3-7s-2d - this latter figure being taken from B. Seebohm Rowntree's How the Labourer Lives (1913) 36-36.
 2. Navy List for January 1918.
 3. RCEIU 1917-18 82.
 4. See, for example, Appendix Fifteen (A) which shows that ABs had £1 more a month during the Crimean War, and Appendix Fifteen (D) which shows that all grades of ships' engineer had higher wages in the same period than at any other time up to 1914.
 5. In the Napoleonic period, according to Robert Gray, a shipowner who gave evidence to the 1833 Select Committee on Manufactures, Commerce and Shipping, seamen's wages had averaged £4-5s a month in 1815 and fell steadily to £2-5s a month in 1833. RSCMCS 1833 225. In 1920, due chiefly to pent-up demand following World War One, an ABs pay stood at £14-10s a month - see RWNMB 1917-19 644. A war bonus of £3 a month had been added to the 1917 wage to give the higher figure.

significant cut for seamen to the £8-10s a month level. When a new National Maritime Board was created on 1 January 1920 to replace the wartime expedient of the same name it had two principal aims: to establish, revise and maintain national standard rates of wages and to create a single source of new labour. As described earlier in this chapter, the latter aim was achieved by the employers' organisation selecting and training new entrants, while the union signed them on and took the dues. The P.C.5. system¹ which had ensured that union representatives were present when men signed-on and paid off was discontinued, but the union presence continued. A war-time 'pool' arrangement for filling vacancies became a permanent feature and performed the same function as the labour exchange used by shore workers.² The wage problem was tackled from 1917 onwards by setting up panels for four classes of seafarers, while a fifth panel represented the owners' interests and was manned wholly by Shipping Federation officials.

At this stage the deck officers were represented

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1. Described in the first page of this chapter.
 2. The parallel is close in that the 'pool' was generally used by the lower grades of sea labour. Its chief customers were, and are, the very young, aliens, casual seafarers who spend long periods ashore between voyages and those with indifferent discharges.

by the Imperial Merchant Service Guild,¹ the engineers by the Marine Engineers Association,² the cooks and stewards by the National Union of Ship's Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers,³ and the seamen and firemen by Wilson's Sailor's and Firemen's Union. Paradoxically, there was very little for these panels to do in 1917-18 because the government was extremely responsive to the demands of merchant seamen while the outcome of the war lay in the balance. For example, in the first few pages of Chapter Four it was shown that the 1854 Act and the Board of Trade interpretation of s.183 left it unclear as to when wages stopped if a ship was wrecked. When, in 1917, the Welsh seamen called for pay to continue until the survivor of a wrecked ship returned to the United

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1. In 1890 there had been four unions representing deck officers. They were (1) the Liverpool-based Mercantile Marine Service Association, (2) the Scottish Shipmasters Association, (3) The London Shipmasters' Society and (4) the British Shipmasters Protection Society, which was strong on the north-east coast. To resolve this division of representation the Shipping Federation had set up the Shipmasters and Officers Union, but it was a 'tame' union and a breakaway group of ships' officers then formed the Imperial Merchant Service Guild. For a detailed historical account of officers' unions see The MNAOA At Work, a Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association pamphlet prepared for the use of union officials in 1979 by Bob Elliott and Brian Orrell.
 2. The United Kingdom Sea-Going Engineers' Association had been started in 1871, and the Marine Engineers Union in 1887. In 1890 the Marine Engineers Union became dominant, and its name was changed to the Marine Engineers Association.
 3. This union, led by Joseph Cotter, was crippled by a strike in 1921 and was absorbed by the Maritime Workers Union in 1922.

Kingdom there was an almost immediate government response, and a pronouncement in August 1917 that the crews of ships lost by war risks were to receive a months' pay or full wages until the date of their arrival in the United Kingdom, whichever was the greater.¹ Similarly, there was no hesitation in granting a war risk bonus of £3 a month on top of ordinary wages in 1918: the Germans were on the Marne and unrestricted submarine warfare was taking a dreadful toll of shipping, so that a bonus payment was seen as a necessity if the workforce was to be maintained at a high level when there were many competing claims for labour. The real significance of the panel system was, in the first place, that it established the principle of joint consultation whereby the Seafarers' Joint Council - representing all the unions - was able to negotiate directly with the Shipping Federation within the framework of a Joint Industrial Council. This Council eventually became the reconstituted National Maritime Board, and the involvement of the Ministry of Shipping² ceased. The second consequence was that the

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1. The complaint of the Welsh seamen is at RCEIU 1917-18 125. The official reply was issued as part of a Statement by the Board of Trade as to Compensation for Death or Injury caused by War Risks, BPP 1917-18 (Cd.8706) XXXVIII 251.
 2. The Ministry of Shipping was a temporary department of state formed by Lloyd George in December 1916 under Sir Josepy Maclay. The Marine Department at the Board of Trade had a muted role while the Ministry existed.

Board of Trade ceased to handle industrial relations in a spirit of 'enlightened paternalism',¹ and changed its principal function to one of dispensing information and ensuring safety standards rather than acting as an umpire between two unruly antagonists. An early example of the new detachment was the Board's attitude to appeals from seafarers over 'bad' discharges in 1918. It declined to arbitrate at all in such mundane matters, and made Superintendents of Mercantile Marine Offices the final judge in disputes of this type between master and seaman.² With the passage of years, the Board came increasingly to a view that its job was to develop policy at an International Labour Organisation or Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organisation level, and to leave the minutiae to National Maritime Board committees.

At this point, it is necessary to draw up a balance sheet covering the gains made, and the opportunities missed, in this last period from 1905 to 1918. First, on the positive side, comes the virtual exclusion of unskilled labour from the industry. In 1910, when the Southampton firemen struck for a rise of wages of ten shillings a month, the Adriatic sailed

1. A phrase used by Roger Davidson to describe the Board's handling of industrial relations between 1896 and 1914. Roger Davidson 'The Board of Trade and Industrial Relations, 1896-1914', The Historical Journal 21 3 571, September 1978.

2. See, The Shipping World Year Book for 1919, 248.

with eighty-nine men in the engineroom who had never been to sea before:¹ in 1918 when a Continuous Certificate of Discharge, a form P.C.5. and a union card had to be produced when signing-on that kind of dilution of labour would have been impossible. In 1905 there had been no proper system of compensation for disability or for loss of effects by war action, no pension or sick care payments and no standard wage. There was no statutory scale of provisions; living space was restricted and the unions were relatively powerless to change material conditions. In 1918 the merchant seaman may be ranked among the aristocrats of labour with high fixed wages, improved statute-backed living and working conditions, restricted entry to his trade, ample representation in disputes with his employers and an improved safety record. On the negative side, the listing must show that hours of work remained unlimited, that there was no overtime, no manning scale, and that the bulk of a man's wages was withheld until a voyage was completed. Accommodation in older vessels may fairly be described as primitive,² and there was no

1. Southampton Times 13 August 1910.

2. Noel Mostert observed that 'the dark side of the nineteenth-century lingered more persistently in the forecastles of a large proportion of the British merchant navy than it finally did almost anywhere in the island itself', and although he was making a contrast with modern tankers a contemporary traveller found that even where conveniences were provided their use was circumscribed. H.M. Tomlinson voyaged to South America in a 3,000-ton Cardiff tramp in 1909-10 and noted wryly, 'there was a bath-room aboard - it was used as a paint locker'. See Noel Mostert, Supership (Penguin, 1975) 308 and H.M. Tomlinson, The Sea and the Jungle (1927) 90.

security of employment because generally each engagement was for a single voyage.¹

Hours of work were not made subject to governmental regulation during this period primarily because although it was on Wilson's list of demands after 1910 he gave higher priority to recognition and a strong union infrastructure. Additionally, the hours of work problem was necessarily linked to manning, and it has been shown that Board of Trade intentions in respect of manning were stifled by the advent of war. The legal position in 1918 was that ss.92 of the 1894 Act and 56 of the 1906 Act said that foreign-going steamships of over 100 tons should be manned by at least a certificated master and a certificated mate, while two certificated engineers were required when the nominal power of the engines exceeded 100hp. Foreign-going sailing vessels of over 100 tons also had to carry a certificated master and a certificated mate, although the latter could be a second mate. The Board of Trade had taken note of the recommendations of the 1894 Royal Commission on Labour minority report,² and in 1896 suggested to owners that three mates be carried in ships of over 2,000 tons.³ In 1909 the Board of Trade

1. 'Leave with pay was virtually unknown ... dismissals without notice were common'. F.J. Thompson 'Peace at Last', Sea Breezes Vol.30, No. 443, December 1960.

2. See Chapter Six. It had been suggested that a manning scale would lead automatically to an eight-hour day.

3. Manning Committee Report, 1896 xxxiv.

reminded surveyors that s.459 of the 1894 Act, as amended by s.1 of the 1897 Act, gave powers to detain undermanned ships, but the guidelines were imprecise and the onus lay on the individual surveyor to make a case.¹ Consequently, it was not until 1936 that an authoritative scale of manning was published. This said that foreign-going steamships of over 700 gross registered tons had to carry 'sufficient deck crew to maintain navigational watches of not less than three of the deck complement for each watch exclusive of the officer'.² Undermanning, the first of Plimsoll's priorities when he called for a Royal Commission in 1873, had taken over sixty years to eliminate.

These deficiencies in legislation and the lack of administrative firmness led to a further lag in workforce conditions in the 1920s and 1930s. Officers and men continued to work a twelve-hour day, and in the tramping trades it was the custom for the master to keep the day watches while the deck officers worked below in the holds with the seamen and apprentices laying dunnage,³ sweeping out and painting in preparation for the next cargo.⁴ Overtime was not paid,⁵ although

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1. Board of Trade Circular 1463, March 1909.
 2. Board of Trade Circular 1707, 21 July 1936.
 3. Small boards, matting or brushwood placed under or between items of cargo to prevent chafe and wetting.
 4. A.G. Course, The Deep Sea Tramp (1960) 153.
 5. A point given emphasis in instructions to masters in this period. See The Shipmasters' Manual published by the Shipping Federation, 1925 edition, 29.

Australian and American seamen had been receiving it for many years,¹ and the only concession allowed for working long hours might be a small bonus, additional rations or a tot of spirits when crew helped to load or unload cargo. In coasters, the Able Seamen worked the winches in port, and at mealtimes the officers relieved them. It was common practice for coasters to unload by day and sail the same evening so that crews could only rely on getting a proper rest every second night.² Crews were better paid, but the nature of the contract with the employer was such that a deep-sea man could work for months and see no more of his wages than the customary five shillings doled-out by the master at a port of call.³ Monthly pay, long advocated by former naval officers and other reformers with experience of the benefits, was resisted by owners, and a sailor signing-on abroad had to find two shillings for the Consul while the shore worker paid nothing at all at

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1. Frank Bullen noted that an overtime rate of one shilling and sixpence an hour was paid in Australian coasters in the 1880s, and the San Francisco Consul reported that overtime on American vessels was fifty cents an hour in the 1900s. See The Log of a Sea-Waif 261 and BPP 1909 LXXVIII 39.
 2. In the coal trade this is still the case. For a modern account of long hours of work in coasters see the article by Rosemary Hart entitled 'Round-the-clock schedules and lack of sleep upset collier officers' in The Telegraph (monthly journal of the Merchant Navy and Airline Officers Association) for July 1980.
 3. A sum carefully calculated as sufficient for a 'run ashore', in the 1930s, but not enough to attract the attention of what Herman Melville called 'land-sharks'.

the labour exchange.¹ After 1918, there was no significant change in the working conditions of seamen until the Second World War put in train a further series of reforms culminating in the passing of the Merchant Shipping Acts of 1970 and 1979 which made the sailors' contract a civil one, abolished the crime of desertion and transferred the judging of disciplinary problems from the masters' cabin to a shore disciplinary committee.² However, the long delay in making a legislative change of this type illustrates the point that while merchant seamen were, in the words of a leading maritime lawyer, 'a meritorious class of His Majesty's subjects' and 'favoured objects of the British Parliament',³ that merit and favour was more apparent in times of danger than in times of peace. At the beginning of this study it was said that state interest in the lot of merchant seamen sprang from an appreciation of their role in times of war: at the end it seems as

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1. The ILO Seamen's Conference held at Genoa in June 1920 produced a draft convention which said, in Article II, that 'Each Member ... shall establish a system of free public employment agencies under the control of a central authority'. Britain did not sign the Placing of Seamen Convention for this reason.
 2. For a full discussion of the effect of the 1970 Act see Cadwalladar, 'Discipline in British Merchant Ships' 147. The provisions of the 1979 Act are summarised in an article entitled 'Merchant Shipping Act 1979 brings in new penalties' in the September 1979 issue of The Telegraph (organ of the Merchant Navy and Airline Officers Association).
 3. David Maclachlan, A Treatise on the Law of Merchant Shipping (sixth edition, 1923) 157.

though sixteenth-century and twentieth-century politicians and administrators took a similar pragmatic view when making laws for a class of worker whose labours went largely unobserved and unreported.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS

This study had two primary aims. The first was to determine the general outline over time of improvements in the merchant seaman's lot, and the result is that the years 1838-51, 1867-83 and 1905-18 may be singled out as periods of sustained advance, with the earlier and intervening years forming plateaux where little significant change has been observed. The three periods of advance have different characteristics, and while mono-causal explanations are always suspect it may be said that paternalism, pragmatism and equity are the appropriate key-words to describe each succeeding phase of reform. The motivation behind the two main types of legislation noted here requires a longer exposition. State concern over the welfare and working conditions of British seamen arose initially through an appreciation of their vital role in times of war, and was a recognition of the fact that seagoing tends to be a residual occupation when alternative work is available ashore. Between the late sixteenth and nineteenth-centuries there were constant attempts designed to (a) keep up the number of recruits to the sea service, and (b) ensure that men could readily be found to man the fleet. Compulsory apprenticeship was decreed many times between 1704 and 1844: the registration of seamen began with

Burghley's census of 1583 and continued until the 1850s. The type of Admiralty inspired legislation designed to coerce the young pauper into going to sea and then enrolling him as a reservist was still emerging in the 1890s, for while the institution of continuous service in the Royal Navy dates from 1853 there was a persistent Admiralty interest in the merchant seaman as a secondary source of manpower. The trade-enhancing mode of legislation came in with the eighteenth-century when longer voyages led to the bonds of discipline being tightened, and a number of Acts passed between 1729 and 1854 shaped the seaman's subsequent unique legal position of being a civil worker employed within the framework of a state-supervised contract of employment with many penal clauses. In the early nineteenth-century, when the British shipping industry was seen to be falling behind its competitors, trade-enhancing legislation had the basis that deficiencies in ships and industrial practice could be corrected by improving the calibre of the workforce, while at the end of the century the 1894 Act tied the seaman to a number of consolidated and fossilized requirements at a time when workers ashore were receiving the benefits of a more liberal interpretation of the relationship between employer and employed. Free trade - the obvious creed for the first industrialised nation - depended for its success on a limitless supply of cheap labour, so that the repeal of the Navigation Laws permitted an influx of lascars and

foreign seamen, while no trade-inhibiting legislation - such as might arise from the imposition of manning regulation, a limitation on the hours of work or a change in the contractual relationship - was formulated.

The principal difference between the two main types of legislation is that Admiralty-inspired laws tended to fail in operation but conferred benefits on merchant seamen fortuitously, while trade-enhancing laws were drafted with specific economic aims and generally succeeded, but doled out any benefit sparingly. For example, although the interest of the Admiralty in the health of merchant seamen and the repatriation of shipwrecked mariners had a strong element of self-interest, there were manifest gains for the men in the shape of medicine chests and a passage home for survivors of shipwrecks. Similarly, while Greenwich Hospital was primarily a naval hospital which took in very few merchant seamen, although all merchant seamen paid for it, its poor record on admissions led to the establishment of the Merchant Seamen's Fund. Even the Royal Navy's cherished right of direct recruitment had an element of advantage. Time and again, the Admiralty had refused to dispense with the arrangement whereby merchant seamen who wished to enter a naval ship could do so on request and thus get their contract broken and be paid in full on leaving the merchant vessel. Although a mere recruiting device to replace men lost by sickness on foreign stations, it nevertheless enabled a 'hazed' or bullied seaman to leave a harsh master and

make a new start. Trade-enhancing laws tended to confer benefit with one clause and take it back with another. The written agreement of 1729 guaranteed wages: it also introduced the new concept of desertion. The 1850 Act set up Mercantile Marine Offices which functioned in the same way as labour exchanges; it gave control of them to local shipping interests by making election to seats on Local Marine Boards largely contingent on the ownership of tonnage. Sometimes, the benefit arising from an Admiralty-inspired measure was cancelled-out by trade-enhancing legislation. The 1844 Act set up a complaints procedure: the 1854 Act said that a complainant could only go ashore to make a complaint if doing so was consistent with his duty to the ship. Philanthropy was quite absent in trade-enhancing legislation, as the preamble to the 1850 Act shows. 'Whereas it is expedient to make Provision for improving the Condition of Masters, Mates and Seamen' is the opening phrase, followed by 'and for maintaining Discipline in the British Merchant Service' to show the Act's real purpose.

A third, but smaller, legislative model was the reformist measure, which had its heyday between 1867 and 1906. These reformist Acts tended to be products of agitation by zealots, sustained public impatience and the desire of newly-elected politicians to show a swift response to a long-debated source of grievance. With the passage of time, these reformist

measures began to reflect a general move towards equitable treatment for merchant seamen, but a lag in conditions of employment afloat existed, and was perpetuated. The agitation of the 1870s about unseaworthy ships and the consequent loss of life did not lead to effective legislation until two decades later, while the lag in introducing effective employers' liability legislation may be put at a quarter of a century. In a few instances the gap was never closed in the period studied. Undermanning took seventy years to eliminate; engagement by the voyage and delayed final payment of wages even longer. Additionally, some early reformist measures may be seen as a freak response to special circumstances, with emotive issues such as slavery and cannibalism producing a statutory food scale and safety legislation, while a gross wartime labour shortage led to special treatment for lascars. However, these exceptions prove the rule that concessions are most easily obtained when the state is in disequilibrium, and in the case of merchant seamen some spectacular concessions were obtained during World War One without recourse to the legislative process at all.

The second primary aim of this study was to assess the relative importance of (a) unionisation, and (b) the executive arm of government in the law-making and administrative process. Union development was in two distinct stages, with the earliest unions locally-organised within close-knit communities. These

local unions could wring concessions from owners if industrial action took place in an environment where seamen and ancilliary workers formed a substantial element of the total workforce, but not otherwise. In the early nineteenth-century the collier seamen struck successfully: the Post Office packet seamen had to give way. These early, local unions produced officials who gave a great deal of evidence to the various Parliamentary enquiries on shipping and seamen in the nineteenth-century, and influenced the direction of legislation in the case of deck-loads, the Merchant Seamen's Fund, accommodation and advance notes. A national union emerged in the late 1880s after a number of false starts, but it was not effective for another quarter of a century for four main reasons. First, the disciplinary provisions in the various Merchant Shipping Acts inhibited direct action at the place of work. Additionally, the workforce was employed atomistically - in the same way as farm workers - while the employers' organisation was strong and had an avowed strike-breaking role. It was not until the men were grouped in large steamships where the conditions approximated to those in factories ashore that strike action could be effective, and thus it was not until 1911 that the union could record both its first successes and gain recognition from the employers. These late gains meant that the union had very little opportunity to influence legislation before 1914, while Wilson's insistence on achieving the closed ship during World War One meant

that the preparation of reformist legislation took second place, and that any attempt to change the contractual basis of employment in the years of inter-war slump and unemployment was doomed to failure. As in the case of safety and employers' liability, there was a lag in unionisation of about a quarter of a century, with the consequence that seamen's conditions in the inter-war years lagged still further behind those of other workers.

The Board of Trade had assumed full responsibility for the merchant seaman in 1850, and this study shows that prior to 1867 the executive was remarkably ineffective and that the MacDonagh thesis of a revolution in government completed by 1860 cannot be valid in this context. There were, it is true, special circumstances in this department of state where two civil servants with pronounced anti-interventionist beliefs dominated for almost forty years, and in many ways it may be said that minor officials accomplished change by stealth where orthodox channels were blocked. This is certainly the case insofar as crimping was concerned, where a Police superintendent took the initiative in providing physical protection at pay-off time while Farrer was lamenting that nothing could be done. Similarly, Gray was saying that government supervision did not save lives while Leach demonstrated that improved health care provision did so. An over-meticulous adherence to legal form characterised the Gray/Farrer approach to seamen's conditions, as shown in the instance

of the so-called 'statutory' food scale which silenced the reformers but did not bind the owners. However, the administrative response moved slowly from a rigid legalistic stance towards an active concern partly through the push of reformist measures and partly by the pull of public opinion. The collection of statistics began to run ahead of Parliamentary demand for information - as in the case of wage statistics - and health provision became better regulated because of the continuing deterioration debate. Around the turn of the century, the Board of Trade began to take the initiative, with the launching of the Continuous Discharge Certificate scheme, and it later sponsored Bills dealing with the payment of larger allotments at more frequent intervals and impartiality in the certification process. The Board of Trade had been forced by public opinion to take an interest in ship losses in the 1830s, was prodded into activity over certification by Fitzroy in the 1840s, pestered for information by Plimsoll in the 1870s and badgered by Wilson in the 1890s. Blighted by Gladstonian parsimony, the Board was always on the defensive, and Kier's argument that the Board may be cited as an example of the significant expansion of the Civil Service seems weak, while MacDonagh's view of an upsurge of collectivism in the application of administrative remedies appears to be a gross over-statement of the facts. It seems more likely on the evidence that the conscientious inspectors whose work in the field of safety, nutrition and accommodation has attracted the attention of historians drew

their strength from the society in which they moved rather than the institution they served. The Parris thesis that institutions respond to changes in society seems more persuasive than the argument that institutions bring about change by reason of their existence.

The final analysis requires the introduction of a counter-factual element. It is necessary to envisage a situation where the Navigation Acts have not been repealed and the Merchant Seamen's Fund was well-managed, better-capitalized and had continued in being. To imagine that desertion had not been made a crime in 1729; that the steam vessel 'took off' in the 1840s and that the Factory Acts had been extended to cover seamen in the 1860s. Most important of all, to see an industry where seamen had the same amount of legislation as other workers - that is to say, very little. If that had been the course of events, the eve of World War One would have seen a merchant navy almost wholly manned by British seamen instead of one with a 28% component of foreign seamen and lascars. These British seamen would have had the benefits of a long-established sickness and retirement scheme based largely on their own contributions, a strong union, model working conditions and considerable labour mobility. As things went, seamen were the most legislated-for body of workers, and while that legislation was voluminous it often failed to touch upon essentials. The Thornton argument of a delayed industrial revolution at sea may be carried a step further by saying that the lag in

industrialisation went hand in hand with the delay in developing the steam vessel, late unionisation and the slow pace of advance in seamen's conditions. In all three instances, the degree of retardation may be put at about a quarter of a century, with consequent linkage effects on Britain's national development. A tight contract of employment and close state supervision of a section of the workforce had been designed to strengthen national defence and enhance trade, but in the event the disciplinary corset merely restricted the nation's growth.

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APPENDIX ONERegistered tonnage of United Kingdom Shipping, 1791-1914

<u>Year</u>	<u>Tonnage</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Tonnage</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Tonnage</u>
1791	1,414,956	1812	2,268,731	1833	2,271,301
1792	1,436,829 ¹	1813	2,348,843	1834	2,312,355
1793	1,453,316	1814	2,313,170	1835	2,360,303
1794	1,456,279	1815	2,477,831	1836	2,350,000
1795	1,425,611	1816	2,504,297	1837	2,334,000
1796	1,240,830 ²	1817	2,421,354	1838	2,421,000
1797	1,454,007	1818	2,452,608	1839	2,571,000
1798	1,494,000	1819	2,451,597	1840	2,768,000
1799	1,551,072	1820	2,439,029	1841	2,935,000
1800	1,698,811 ³	1821	2,355,832	1842	3,041,000
1801	1,786,325	1822	2,315,403	1843	3,008,000
1802	1,901,162	1823	2,302,867	1844	3,044,000
1803	1,986,076	1824	2,348,314	1845	3,123,000
1804	2,066,061	1825	2,327,341	1846	3,200,000
1805	2,092,489	1826	2,461,461	1847	3,808,000
1806	2,079,914	1827	2,181,138 ⁴	1848	3,401,000
1807	2,096,827	1828	2,193,300	1849	3,489,000
1808	2,130,396	1829	2,199,959	1850	3,565,000 ⁵
1809	2,167,221	1830	2,201,592	1851	3,662,000
1810	2,210,661	1831	2,224,356	1852	3,759,000
1811	2,247,322	1832	2,261,860		

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1. Lord Liverpool's papers (BLRD Add. MSS. 38,432) show about 103,000 tons more.
 2. England and Wales only.
 3. Lord Liverpool's papers show about 157,000 tons more.
 4. Drop chiefly due to de novo registration arrangements.
 5. BPP Annual Statement of Trade and Navigation gives about 60,000 tons less.

APPENDIX ONE

(ii)

(All figures represent thousands of tons)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Tonnage</u> (sail)	<u>Tonnage</u> (steam)	<u>Total</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Tonnage</u> (sail)	<u>Tonnage</u> (steam)	<u>Total</u>
1853	3,780	250	4,030	1874	4,108	1,871	5,979
1854	3,943	306	4,249	1875	4,207	1,946	6,152
1855	3,969	381	4,349	1876	4,258	2,005	6,263
1856	3,980	386	4,367	1877	4,261	2,139	6,400
1857	4,141	417	4,559	1878	4,239	2,316	6,555
1858	4,205	452	4,659	1879	4,069	2,511	6,580
1859	4,226	437	4,663	1880	3,851	2,723	6,575
1860	4,204	454	4,659 ¹	1881	3,688	3,004	6,692
1861	4,301	506	4,807	1882	3,622	3,335	6,957
1862	4,397	538	4,934	1883	3,514	3,728	7,242
1863	4,731	597	5,328	1884	3,465	3,944	7,409
1864	4,930	697 ²	5,628	1885	3,457	3,973	7,430
1865	4,937	824	5,760	1886	3,397	3,965	7,362
1866	4,904	876	5,779	1887	3,250	4,085	7,335
1867	4,853	901	5,754	1888	3,115	4,350	7,464
1868	4,878	902	5,781	1889	3,041	4,718	7,759
1869	4,765	948	5,714	1890	2,936	5,043	7,979 ³
1870	4,578	1,113	5,691	1891	2,972	5,307	8,279
1871	4,375	1,320	5,694	1892	3,080	5,564	8,645
1872	4,213	1,538	5,751	1893	3,038	5,740	8,779
1873	4,091	1,714	5,805	1894	2,987	5,969	8,956

-
1. BPP Annual Statement of Trade and Navigation gives about 72,000 tons less.
 2. A Return of Steam Shipping at BPP 1865 L 419 shows 21,000 tons less.
 3. BPP Annual Statment of Trade and Navigation gives 34,000 tons less.

APPENDIX ONE

(iii)

(All figures represent thousands of tons)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Tonnage</u> <u>(sail)</u>	<u>Tonnage</u> <u>(steam)</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Tonnage</u> <u>(sail)</u>	<u>Tonnage</u> <u>(steam)</u>	<u>Total</u>
1895	2,867	6,122	8,988	1905	1,671	9,065	10,736
1896	2,736	6,284	9,020	1906	1,555	9,612	11,167
1897	2,590	6,364	8,953	1907	1,461	10,024	11,485
1898	2,388	6,614	9,002	1908	1,403	10,139	11,541
1899	2,247	6,917	9,164	1909	1,301	10,285	11,586
1900	2,096	7,208	9,304	1910	1,113	10,443	11,556
1901	1,991	7,618	9,608	1911	981	10,718	11,699
1902	1,951	8,104	10,055	1912	903	10,992	11,895
1903	1,869	8,400	10,269	1913	847	11,273	12,120
1904	1,803	8,752	10,555	1914	794	11,622	12,415

(Sources)

- (1) 1791-1795 and 1797-1835. Tables Compiled from Annual Statements of Trade and Navigation put before the Select Committee on the Navigation Laws, RSCNL 1847-48 772-773.
- (2) 1796 from PRO Customs 17/18 (England and Wales only).
- (3) 1836-1914. R. Page, Commerce and Industry (1919) ii 155-156.

Note Deductions from registered tonnage figures in respect of engine spaces in steam vessels after 1817 mean that there is a general under-recording of steam tonnage vis-a-vis sailing ship tonnage, and when comparing the two types of vessel it may be advantageous to look at Appendix Two which has the respective numbers of steamers and sailing ships between 1853 and 1914.

APPENDIX TWONumbers of UK-registered steam and sailing vessels,1853-1914

<u>Year</u>	<u>Steam</u>	<u>Sail</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Steam</u>	<u>Sail</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Steam</u>	<u>Sail</u>
1853	1,385	25,224	1873	3,863	21,698	1893	8,088	13,239
1854	1,524	25,335	1874	4,033	21,464	1894	8,263	12,943
1855	1,674	24,274	1875	4,170	21,291	1895	8,386	12,617
1856	1,697	24,480	1876	4,335	21,144	1896	8,522	12,274
1857	1,824	25,273	1877	4,564	21,169	1897	8,590	11,911
1858	1,926	25,615	1878	4,862	21,058	1898	8,838	11,566
1859	1,918	25,784	1879	5,027	20,538	1899	9,029	11,167
1860	2,000	25,663	1880	5,247	19,938	1900	9,209	10,773
1861	2,133	25,905	1881	5,505	19,325	1901	9,484	10,572
1862	2,228	26,212	1882	5,814	18,892	1902	9,803	10,455
1863	2,298	26,339	1883	6,260	18,415	1903	10,122	10,330
1864	2,490	26,142	1884	6,601	18,053	1904	10,370	10,210
1865	2,718	26,069	1885	6,644	17,018	1905	10,522	10,059
1866	2,831	26,140	1886	6,653	16,179	1906	10,907	9,857
1867	2,931	25,842	1887	6,663	15,473	1907	11,394	9,648
1868	2,944	25,500	1888	6,871	15,025	1908	11,626	9,542
1869	2,972	24,187	1889	7,139	14,640	1909	11,797	9,392
1870	3,178	23,189	1890	7,410	14,181	1910	12,000	9,090
1871	3,382	22,510	1891	7,720	13,823	1911	12,242	8,830
1872	3,673	22,103	1892	7,950	13,578	1912	12,382	8,510
						1913	12,602	8,336
						1914	12,862	8,203

(Source) R. Page, Commerce and Industry (1919) ii 155-156.

APPENDIX THREE

Seamen employed on merchant ships registered in the United Kingdom, 1788 to 1914¹

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>
1788	100,483	1804	139,297	1819	158,830	1835	143,109
1789	100,846	1805	142,237	1820	159,210	1836	142,131
1790	106,371	1806	142,277	1821	154,283	1837	143,462
1791	109,055	1807	144,311	1822	151,317	1838	147,357
1792	109,757	1808	144,024	1823	150,738	1839	155,263
1793	111,361	1809	147,741	1824	153,548	1840	165,527
1794	108,437	1810	150,038	1825	151,124	1841	172,341
1795	104,345	1811	148,456	1826	153,559	1842	176,024
1796	107,769	1812	150,059	1827	134,195	1843	175,155
1797	110,172	1813	153,881	1828	135,069	1844	175,691
1798	114,722	1814	158,057	1829	134,516	1845	183,166
1799	119,235 ²	1815	162,603	1830	133,649	1846	159,634 ³
1800	126,774	1816	161,961	1831	136,016	1847	188,978
1801	132,276	1817	155,542	1832	138,432	1848	191,477
1802	136,626	1818	158,488	1833	140,089	1849	192,900
1803	139,432			1834	142,026 ⁴	1850	193,170

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1. Comment on the reliability of the figures on this page is embodied in the note at the end of this appendix.
 2. An almost identical figure appears in David MacPherson Annals of Commerce, Manufactures, Fisheries and Navigation (1805) iv 490.
 3. As explained at the end of this appendix, the figures from 1835 to 1850 become steadily less reliable because the Registrar-General of Seamen seldom removed a name from his register, being reluctant to do so unless a man died at sea. This figure, taken from Finlayson's Report 1850, is put in to show that around mid-century the official statistics are at least 15% too high.
 4. A House of Commons exchange on 21 May 1834 produced a figure of 120,000 men. With allowance made for ships laid up, men off work between voyages and those who have alternative employment such as fishermen and agricultural workers, the tonnage-based figure of 142,026 men, representing a theoretical maximum if every ship was at sea and fully manned, seems reasonably accurate. See Hansard 3 23 1148 for the former figure.

APPENDIX THREE

(ii)

Seamen employed on merchant ships registered
in the United Kingdom differentiated by type
of vessel and nationality

<u>Year</u>	<u>In Sail</u>	<u>In Steam</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>British</u>	<u>Foreign</u>
1851	131,277	10,660	141,837	136,044	5,793
1852	146,286	13,277	159,563	153,863	5,700
1853	155,006	17,519	172,525 ¹	165,204	7,321
1854	146,522	15,894	162,416	149,216	13,200
1855	147,288	21,249	168,537	155,610	12,927
1856	151,080	22,838	173,918	160,597	13,321
1857	151,434	24,953	176,387	162,012	14,375
1858	152,655	25,177	177,832	165,498	12,334
1859	146,208	26,298	172,506	160,210	12,296
1860	145,487	26,105	171,592	157,312	14,280
1861	144,949	27,008	171,957	N/A	N/A
1862	146,047	27,816	173,863	157,767	16,096
1863	153,651	31,076	184,727	165,794	18,933
1864	158,276	37,480	195,756	173,833	21,923
1865	158,589	39,054	197,643	177,363	20,280
1866	156,568	39,803	196,371	N/A	N/A
1867	153,229	43,111	196,340	174,523	21,817
1868	153,840	43,662	197,502	177,239	20,263
1869	152,186	43,304	195,490	175,332	20,158
1870	147,207	48,755	195,962	177,961	18,001

1. A figure of 190,000 men given to the House of Commons on 3 February 1854 was clearly put in solely to make a political point. See Hansard 3 130 230.

APPENDIX THREE

(iii)

Seamen employed on merchant ships registered
in the United Kingdom differentiated by type
of vessel and nationality

<u>Year</u>	<u>In sail</u>	<u>In steam</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>British</u>	<u>Foreign</u>	
1871	141,035	58,703	199,738	181,973	17,765	
1872	137,101	66,619	203,720	183,129	20,591	
1873	130,877	71,362	202,239	182,399	19,840	
1874	128,733	74,873	203,606	182,687	20,919	
1875	126,240	73,427	199,667	178,994	20,673	
1876	125,811	72,827	198,638	177,727	20,911	
1877	123,563	72,999	196,562	173,926	22,636	
1878	120,085	75,500	195,585	172,242	23,343	
1879	115,177	78,371	193,548	169,145	24,403	
1880	108,668	84,304	192,972	169,692	23,280	
1881	102,498	90,405	192,903	168,098	24,805	
1882	97,201	98,736	195,937	169,920	26,017	
1883	95,306	105,421	200,727	N/A	N/A	
1884	91,383	108,271	199,654	171,871	27,783	
1885	90,968	107,813	198,781	N/A	N/A	
1886	85,415	119,055	204,470	N/A	N/A	
1887	81,442	121,101	202,543	N/A	N/A	<u>Lascars</u>
1888	90,594	133,079	223,673 ¹	179,969	25,277	18,427
1889	87,765	142,498	230,263	N/A	N/A	
1890	84,218	151,890	236,108	N/A	N/A	

1. Masters were not included until 1888 - hence the steep rise in the total figure. Lascars were first separately recorded at the same time.

APPENDIX THREE

(iv)

Seamen employed on merchant ships registered
in the United Kingdom differentiated by type
of vessel, nationality and ethnic origin

<u>Year</u>	<u>In sail</u>	<u>In steam</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>British</u>	<u>Foreign</u>	<u>Lascars</u>
1891	81,189	159,291	240,480	186,176	30,267	24,037
1892	80,789	160,946	241,735	185,437	30,899	25,399
1893	78,306	162,668	240,974	186,628	29,549	24,797
1894	74,851	165,607	240,458	183,233	31,050	26,175
1895	71,606	168,880	240,486	180,074	32,235	28,077
1896	68,207	173,832	242,039	178,994	33,046	29,999
1897	63,915	177,016	240,931	175,549	33,898	31,484
1898	59,167	183,386	242,553	174,980	35,308	32,265
1899	54,333	189,802	244,135	174,266	36,064	33,805
1900	50,309	197,139	247,448	174,532	36,893	36,023
1901	46,492	201,481	247,973	172,912	37,630	37,431
1902	44,179	209,361	253,361	174,538	39,825	39,177
1903	42,238	215,699	257,937	176,520	40,396	41,021
1904	39,974	219,615	259,489	176,975	39,832	42,682
1905	37,567	226,119	263,686	180,492	39,711	43,483
1906	35,622	235,169	270,791	183,340	38,084	44,367
1907	33,059	244,087	277,146	194,848	37,694	44,604
1908	30,535	245,186	275,721	196,834	34,735	44,152
1909	28,334	245,973	274,307	198,474	31,873	43,960
1910	25,833	250,473	276,306	201,910	30,462	43,934
1911	20,728	260,572	281,300	205,065	30,783	45,452
1912	17,738	269,023	286,806	208,635	30,960	47,211
1913	16,166	275,891	292,057	212,570	32,639	46,848
1914	14,094	281,558	295,652	212,640	31,396	51,616

APPENDIX THREE

(v)

Seamen employed on merchant ships registered
in the United Kingdom differentiated by type
of vessel, nationality and ethnic origin

(Sources)

PRO Customs 17/14 to 17/29.
BPP Annual Statements of Trade and Navigation.
R. Page, Commerce and Industry (1919) ii 155-159.
Returns of the Registrar-General of Shipping. BPP
1831-32 (130) XXVI 193-199.
Registrar-General of Shipping's Report of 21 June
1843. On BPP 1843 LII 408.
The 1860 Report from the Select Committee on
Merchant Shipping, BPP 1860 XIII, Appendix Eleven,
Table Y, and returns at BPP 1860 LX 424, BPP 1871
LXI 212, BPP 1876 LXVI 32 and BPP 1886 LIX 34.
Return of the Registrar-General of Seamen dated
21 February 1867 on PRO MT/9 32 M.1399/1867.

Note

Prior to 1835 the source of information was the data collected by the Registrar of Shipping. Owners registering vessels for the first time stated how many men they intended to employ, and that number was never amended in any way. Many ships were laid up at certain times of the year, were under repair, or had no crew on board while being loaded or unloaded so that the number of men must always be an over-statement. For the period down to 1815 the amount of under-recording due to masters not being included is estimated at 10%, while the over-recording is about 20%. Lord Liverpool's papers (BLRD Add. MSS. 38,432) show that the official figures are about 10% too high, and for the period to 1815 that assumption seems correct. In the slump years down to the mid-1830s when more vessels were laid up the figures are probably 15% too high.

Between 1835 and 1850 the Registrar-General of Seamen based his figures on register tickets issued, but there was no provision (except in the case of death at sea) for removing men from the register. Between 1841 and 1850 the statistics may therefore be giving a figure increasing from about 15% to around 30% too high, and the drop of some 50,000 men in the year 1851 shows that a drastic correction was needed. From 1888, when masters are included for the first time, the figures are reasonably accurate.

APPENDIX FOUR

(a) The form of agreement of 1797.

IT is hereby agreed between the Master, Seamen, and Mariners, of the Ship _____ now bound for the Port of _____ and _____ the Master or Commander of the said Ship, That in Consideration of the Monthly or other Wages against each respective Seaman or Mariner's Name hereunto set, they severally shall and will perform the above-mentioned Voyage; and the said Master doth hereby agree with and hire the said Seamen and Mariners for the said Voyage at such Monthly Wages, to be paid pursuant to the Laws of Great Britain; and they the said Seamen and Mariners do hereby promise and oblige themselves to do their Duty, and obey the lawful Commands of their Officers on Board the said Ship or Boats thereunto belonging, as become good and faithful Seamen and Mariners, and at all Places where the said Ship shall put in or anchor during the said Ship's Voyage, to do their best Endeavours for the Preservation of the said Ship and Cargo, and not to neglect or refuse doing their Duty by Day or Night; nor shall go out of the said Ship on Board any other Vessel, or be on Shore under any Pretence whatsoever, till the Voyage is ended and the Ship discharged of her Cargo, without Leave first obtained of the Master, Captain, or Commanding Officer on Board; and in Default thereof they freely agree to be liable to the Penalties mentioned in the Act of Parliament, made in the Second Year of the Reign of King George the Second, intituled, *An Act for the better Regulation and Government of Seamen in the Merchants Service*; and the Act, made in the Thirty-seventh Year of His present Majesty's Reign, intituled, *An Act for preventing the Desertion of Seamen from British Merchant Ships trading to His Majesty's Colonies and Plantations in the West Indies*: And it is further agreed by the Parties to these Presents, That Twenty-four Hours Absence without Leave shall be deemed a Total Desertion, and render such Seamen and Mariners liable to the Forfeitures and Penalties contained in the Acts above recited; that each and every lawful Command which the said Master shall think necessary to issue for the effectual Government of the said Vessel, suppressing Immorality and Vice of all Kinds, be strictly complied with under the Penalty of the Person or Persons disobeying, forfeiting his or their whole Wages or Hire, together with every Thing belonging to him or them on Board the said Vessel: And it is further agreed, That no Officer or Seaman, or Person belonging to the said Ship, shall demand or be entitled to his Wages, or any Part thereof, until the Arrival of the said Ship at the above-mentioned Port of Discharge, and her Cargo delivered, nor less than Twenty Days in case the Seaman is not employed in the Delivery: And it is hereby further agreed between the Master and Officers of the said Ship, That whatever Apparel, Furniture, and Stores, each of them may receive into their Charge, belonging to the said Ship, shall be accounted for on her Return; and in case any Thing shall be lost or damaged through their Carelessness or Insufficiency, it shall be made good by such Officer or Seaman by whose Means it may happen to

the Master and Owner of the said Ship: And whereas it is customary for the Officers and Seamen on the Ship's Return Home in the River, and during the Time their Cargoes are delivering, to go on Shore each Night to sleep, greatly to the Prejudice of such Ship and Freighters; be it further agreed by the said Parties, That neither Officer nor Seaman shall, on any Pretence whatsoever, be entitled to such Indulgence, but shall do their Duty by Day in Discharge of the Cargo, and keep such Watch by Night as the Master or Commander of the said Ship shall think necessary, in order for the Preservation of the above: And whereas it often happens that Part of the Cargo is embezzled after being delivered into Lighters, and as such Losses are made good by the Owners of the Ships; be it therefore agreed by these Presents, That whatever Officer or Seaman the Master shall think proper to appoint, shall take Charge of the Cargo in the Lighters, and go with the same to the lawful Quay, and there deliver his Charge to the Ship's Husband, or his Representative, or see the same safely weighed at the King's Beam, and in consequence of their true Fidelity, such Officer or Seaman shall be entitled to Two Shillings and Sixpence each Lighter, exclusive of their Monthly Pay; and should it so happen that Lighters are detained a considerable Time at the Quay before they can be unloaded, such Officer and Seaman so appointed shall in that Case be entitled to Two Shillings and Sixpence for every Twenty-four Hours, exclusive of their said Monthly Pay; that each Seaman and Mariner who shall well and truly perform the above-mentioned Voyage (provided always that there be no Plunderage, Embezzlement, or other unlawful Acts committed on the said Vessel's Cargo or Stores) shall be entitled to their Wages or Hire that may become due to him, pursuant to this Agreement; that for the due Performance of each and every the above mentioned Articles and Agreements, and Acknowledgement of their being voluntary and without Compulsion, or any other clandestine Means being used, the said Parties have hereto subscribed their Names, the Day and Month set opposite to their respective Names.

Place and Time of Entry.	Men's Names.	Quality.	Witness to each Man's Signing.	Pay in the River.		Wages per Month, or by the Run for the Voyage.	Whole Wages.
				Whole.	Half.		

(b) the 1835 form of agreement

An AGREEMENT made, pursuant to the Directions of an Act of Parliament passed in the Sixth Year of the Reign of His Majesty King William the Fourth, between the Master of the Ship _____ and of the Burthen of _____ Tons, and the several Persons whose Names are subscribed hereto.

It is agreed by and on the Part of the said Persons, and they severally hereby engage, to serve on board the said Ship in the several Capacities against their respective Names expressed, on a Voyage from the Port of _____ to _____ [here the intended Voyage is to be described as nearly as can be done, and the Places at which it is intended the Ship shall touch, or if that cannot be done, the Nature of the Voyage in which she is to be employed,] and back to the Port of _____ and the said Crew further engage to conduct themselves in an orderly, faithful, honest, careful, and sober Manner, and to be at all Times diligent in their respective Duties and Stations, and to be obedient to the lawful Commands of the Master in every thing relating to the said Ship, and the Materials, Stores, and Cargo thereof, whether on board such Ship, in Boats, or on Shore [here may be inserted any other Clauses which the Parties may think proper to be introduced into the Agreement, provided that the same be not contrary to or inconsistent with the Provisions and Spirit of this Act]. In consideration of which Services to be duly, honestly, carefully, and faithfully performed, the said Master doth hereby promise and agree to pay to the said Crew, by way of Compensation or Wages, the Amount against their Names respectively expressed. In witness whereof the said Parties have hereto subscribed their Names on the Days against their respective Signatures mentioned.

Place and Time of Entry.			Men's Names.	Age.	Place of Birth.	Quality.	Amount of Wages per Calendar Month, Share, or Voyage.	Witness to Signature.	Name of Ship in which the Seaman last served.
Day.	Month.	Year.							

Note.—Any Embezzlement or wilful or negligent Loss or Destruction of any Part of the Ship's Cargo or Stores may be made good to the Owner out of the Wages (so far as they will extend) of the Seaman guilty of the same; and if any Seaman shall enter himself as qualified for a Duty to which he shall prove to be not competent, he will be subject to a Reduction of the Rate of Wages hereby agreed for in proportion to his Incompetency.

ENG. 1.

AGREEMENT AND**FOREIGN**

The term "Foreign-going Ship" includes every Ship employed in some place or places situate beyond the following limits: the the continent of Europe between the River Elbe and Brest incl as including the Republic of Ireland.

Name of Ship ¹		Official No.	Port of Registry
REGISTERED MANAGING OWNER OR MANAGER			No. Appr accompn
Name	Address (State No. of House, Street and Town)		

The Seberal Persons whose names are hereto subscribed, and whose descriptions are contained herein, and of whom _____ are engaged as Sailors, hereby agree to serve on board the said Ship, in the several capacities expressed against their respective names on a voyage from⁴

And it is :

And the Crew agree to conduct themselves in an orderly, faithful, honest and sober manner, and to be at all times diligent in their respective Duties, and to be obedient to the lawful commands of the said Master, or of any person who shall lawfully succeed him, and of their Superior Officers, in everything relating to the said Ship and the Stores and Cargo thereof whether on board, in boats or on shore; in consideration of which Services to be duly performed, the said Master hereby agrees to pay the said Crew as Wages the sums against their Names respectively expressed, and to supply them with provisions according to the Scale printed herein.

And it is hereby agreed that any Embezzlement or wilful or negligent Destruction of any part of the Ship's Cargo or Stores shall be made good to the Owner out of the Wages of the Person guilty of the same.

And it is further agreed, that if any Seaman enters himself in a capacity for which he is incompetent, he is liable to be derated.

And it is also agreed, that additional clauses and the Regulations authorized by the Board of Trade which are printed herein and numbered⁴

APPENDIX FIVEApprentices indentured to sea service, 1845-1912

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>
1845	15,704	1867	5,444	1890	1,749
1846	10,376	1868	4,975	1891	1,847
1847	11,521	1869	4,613	1892	1,821
1848	11,440	1870	4,241	1893	1,752
1849	9,659	1871	4,111	1894	1,861
1850	5,055	1872	4,360	1895	1,636
1851	5,275	1873	4,054	1896	1,321
1852	5,845	1874	4,455	1897	1,302
1853	6,828	1875	4,397	1898	1,336
1854	7,935	1876	4,740	1899	1,203
1855	7,461	1877	4,488	1900	1,103
1856	7,410	1878	4,155	1901	1,242
1857	6,850	1879	3,789	1902	1,220
1858	5,578	1880	3,501	1903	1,072
1859	5,773	1881	2,923	1904	1,167
1860	5,616	1882	2,992	1905	1,195
1861	5,836	1883	1,972	1906	1,451
1862	5,880	1884	1,997	1907	1,274
1863	5,636	1885	1,986	1908	1,210
1864	5,520	1886	1,766	1909	1,261
1865	5,638	1887	1,864	1910	1,156
1866	5,454	1888	1,853	1911	1,306
		1889	1,723	1912	1,461

(Sources) The Supply of British Seamen, Appendix Five,
 BPP 1873 LIX 237, and Board of Trade returns
 at BPP 1890-91 LXXVI 34 and BPP LX 101.

APPENDIX SIX

Merchant seamen received as patients into the Seamen's Hospital at

Greenwich, 1821 - 1881.

<u>Ethnic Origin</u>	<u>1821-31</u>	<u>1831-41</u>	<u>1841-51</u>	<u>1851-61</u>	<u>1861-71</u>	<u>1871-81</u>
UK	10,361	18,350	18,874	12,898	11,668	12,300
N. Europe	1,394	2,295	2,481	4,408	5,268	5,634
Americas	791	1,141	1,315	1,717	1,895	1,418
S. Europe	249	553	592	700	612	690
Asiatic	81	435	568	1,278	162	544
Other	205	299	260	238	203	3,474 ¹
TOTAL	13,081	23,073	24,090	21,237	19,808	21,012

1. New categories were created for this return: the largest being Austrian seamen, some 2,700 men. 'Other' is chiefly made up, before 1871-81, of South Sea Islanders and men born at sea.

(Source) Annual Reports of the Seamen's Hospital Society.

APPENDIX SEVEN

Deserters from UK-registered vessels, 1845-55,
and deserters and failures-to-join at home and
abroad for 1895, 1898-1900 and 1908

Deserters

1845	10,274	1846	8,854	1847	14,360
1848	10,513	1849	10,232	1850	9,197
1851	10,039	1852	9,446	1853	15,624
1854	10,967	1855	9,282		

	<u>Deserters</u>		<u>Failures-to-join</u>		
	<u>UK</u>	<u>Abroad</u>	<u>UK</u>	<u>Abroad</u>	<u>Total</u>
1895	3,629	14,502	14,399	N/A	32,530
1898	4,535	17,457	20,111	3,200	45,303
1899	5,728	21,116	24,046	3,849	54,739
1900	5,754	23,201	25,478	3,428	57,861
1908	1,570	19,619	12,943	3,692	37,824

Note: No record was kept of men who deserted one ship to join another at a higher rate of pay.

(Sources) RSCMS 1860 Paper LL, Appendix 11; BPP 1901 LXVIII 71-73 and the Return of Deserters and Failures to Join in Various Parts of the World, BPP 1909 (Cd.4803) LXXVIII 1-5.

APPENDIX EIGHTDeaths at Sea(A) 1852 - 1864

<u>Year</u>	<u>Disease</u>	<u>Accident</u>	<u>Drowning</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
1852	1,319	122	721	224	2,386
1853	2,020	135	875	418	3,448
1854	1,602	119	956	260	2,937
1855	2,005	176	1,032	404	3,617
1856	2,235	154	1,346	308	4,043
1857	1,931	120	1,489	249	3,789
1858	1,664	202	1,778	152	3,796
1859	1,421	175	1,630	419	3,645
1860	1,433	184	1,875	461	3,953
1861	1,350	175	1,945	304	3,774
1862	1,315	146	1,998	326	3,785
1863	1,188	187	1,727	494	3,596
1864	1,458	207	2,077	541	4,283

(Source) Board of Trade return of 30 March 1865 attached to Papers Relating to the Seamen's Hospital Society, BPP 1865 (305) L 331.

(B) 1866 - 1879

<u>Year</u>	<u>Disease</u>	<u>Accident</u>	<u>Drowning</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
1866			2,390		4,866
1867	1,909	277	2,839	256	5,283
1868	1,783				5,237
1869	1,460	277	2,839	256	4,832
1870					4,523
1871					4,338

(ii)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Disease</u>	<u>Accident</u>	<u>Drowning</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
1872					4,123
1873					5,393
1874	1,255	282	2,859	206	4,602
1875	1,091	306	2,512	167	4,076
1876	1,275	307	2,270	299	4,151
1877			2,538		4,181
1878			2,086		3,870
1879			2,001		3,692

(Sources) Merchant Service (Deaths), BPP 1870 (150) LX 22 and Registrar-General of Shipping and Seamen's Return of 29 July 1878, BPP 1878 (322) LXVII 68-69.

(C) Deaths by wreck, drowning and accident of masters and seamen, 1891 to 1908.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Deaths</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Deaths</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Deaths</u>
1891	1,918	1897	1,424	1903	1,238
1892	1,864	1898	1,392	1904	1,072
1893	1,814	1899	1,737	1905	1,192
1894	1,874	1900	1,537	1906	953
1895	1,869	1901	1,277	1907	1,241
1896	1,541	1902	1,179	1908	1,047

(Source) BPP. Various Board of Trade Wreck Returns.

(iii)

(D) Decennial analysis and comparison of deaths in mining and the shipping industry, 1861-90.

	<u>Shipping</u>	<u>Mining</u>
1861-70	1 in 73	1 in 300
1871-80	1 in 67	1 in 425
1881-90	1 in 93	1 in 519

(Source) BPP. Various Board of Trade Annual Returns.

(E) Crew deaths in steam and sailing ships, 1900-1914, by yearly average over five-year periods.(a) Sailing ships

<u>Years</u>	<u>By wreck</u>	<u>Accident</u>	<u>Disease</u> ¹	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>% age Workforce</u>
1900-04	317	188	214	719	1.6%
1905-09	234	128	125	487	1.5%
1910-14	120	68	47	235	1.3%

(b) Steamships

1900-04	361	452	1,031	1,844	0.9%
1905-09	284	441	1,104	1,829	0.75%
1910-14	578 ²	437	1,054	2,069	0.75%

1. Includes suicide and homicide.

2. Includes Titanic losses, which amounted to 673 passengers and crew.(Source) Board of Trade Return of Shipping Casualties, 1924. An HMSO booklet - copy in BLRD under reference BS 41/15.

APPENDIX NINE(A) Comparative rates of seamen reporting sick and being placed on the sick list in various climates.

<u>Cause</u>	<u>Climate</u>				
(a) <u>Injury</u>	<u>N.</u> <u>Temperate</u>	<u>S.</u> <u>Temperate</u>	<u>Med.</u>	<u>Trop.</u>	<u>Mixed</u>
Reporting	100	135	243	194	162
Placed sick	100	150	225	188	175

(b) <u>Skin Disease</u>	<u>N.</u> <u>Temperate</u>	<u>S.</u> <u>Temperate</u>	<u>Med.</u>	<u>Trop.</u>	<u>Mixed</u>
Reporting	100	145	172	321	186
Placed sick	100	229	229	386	214

(Source) J.A. Fraser Robert, 'Returns of Sickness: A Contribution to Medical Climatology', British Journal of the Society of Medicine, No. 2 1948 55.

(B) Cases of scurvy admitted to the Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital, 1852-69.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>
1852	51	1858	77	1864	85
1853	63	1859	90	1865	102
1854	124	1860	77	1866	101
1855	159	1861	99	1867	94
1856	91	1862	64	1868	74
1857	77	1863	86	1869	40

(Source) Annual Reports of the Seamen's Hospital Society

APPENDIX TENDistribution of seamen paupers in England
and Wales in the year 1857

<u>County</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Ranking</u>
Bedfordshire	3	(1) Kent
Berkshire	2	(2) Middlesex
Buckinghamshire	2	(3) Durham
Cambridgeshire	6	(4) Northumberland
Cheshire	7	(5) Yorkshire
Cornwall	29	(6) Devonshire
Cumberland	51	(7) Norfolk
Devonshire	81	(8) Essex
Dorsetshire	22	(9) Suffolk
Durham	162	(10) Cumberland
Essex	73	
Gloucestershire	8	
Herefordshire	1	
Huntingdonshire	1	
Kent	184	
Lancashire	43	
Lincolnshire	46	
Middlesex	172	
Monmouthshire	7	
Norfolk	76	
Northumberland	152	
Nottinghamshire	5	
Shropshire	4	
Somersetshire	37	
Hampshire	36	
Staffordshire	4	
Suffolk	61	
Surrey	12	
Worcestershire	3	
Sussex	29	
Yorkshire	110	
Anglesey	17	
Cardiganshire	8	
Carnarvon	36	
Glamorgan	32	
Merioneth	1	
Montgomeryshire	3	
Pembrokeshire	32	

(Source) Return of Seamen in Workhouses or in receipt
of Outdoor Relief, BPP 1857 (315 - Sess.2)
XXXII 573.

APPENDIX ELEVEN

(A) <u>Naval provision scale,</u> <u>1785</u> ₁	(B) <u>Diet of a merchant seaman,</u> <u>1830</u> ₂
Weekly: 6 lbs biscuit	Sunday Junk, duff
7 gallons beer	Monday Hog, peas, soup
6 lbs meat	Tuesday Bread, junk
2 pints peas	Wednesday Hog, peas, duff
3 pints oatmeal	Thursday Junk, duff
6oz butter	Friday Hog, peas, soup
12oz cheese	Saturday Junk, bread

(C) <u>Hospital patients,</u> <u>1830</u> ₃	(D) <u>Ship Elizabeth Ann, late</u> <u>1860s</u> ₄
Breakfast: pint of tea	Mon/Wed/Fri 1½lb salt pork
Dinner: ¾lb beef	pea soup
½lb potatoes	Tues/Thurs 1½lb salt beef
pint soup	duff
Supper: pint barley gruel	Saturday As Tues/Thurs
Daily: 1lb bread or biscuit	with rice instead of duff
	Sunday Half ration
	preserved meat, and half sal
	Tea daily, and 1lb sugar
	weekly.

-
1. Gilbert Blane, Observations on the Diseases Incident to Seamen (1785) 301.
 2. Diary of Able Seaman Charles Picknell quoted by Basil Lubbock in his contribution to C. Northcote Parkinson, The Trade Winds (1948) 116.
 3. MBSHS (3) - 2 January 1830 to 25 July 1834.
 4. Wilson, My Stormy Voyage Through Life 36.

(E) Engineer's mess scale, African Steamship Company,
circa 1860¹

Bread: 11b soft bread or Captain's Biscuit. Meat: 1½lbs per day, all fresh or half salted. Also, ½lb each of pickled pork, beef or bacon for breakfast. Vegetables: a sufficient supply of potatoes or yams. Puddings: plum on Sundays, plain twice a week. Sugar: 1lb a week, butter 1lb a week, cheese ½lb a week, tea 3½oz.

(F) The Liverpool Scale² (G) Money, Wigram and Sons Scale³

Daily: 3 quarts water	Daily: 7 pints in hot weather: 6
11b bread	in cold
1½lbs beef or pork	Weekly bread - unrestricted
Weekly 1½lbs flour	½ pint vinegar
1½ pints peas	6.4lbs salt beef
Small quantities of	4.8lbs salt pork
tea, coffee and	2lbs flour
sugar	1lb peas
	7oz sugar
(second half of nineteenth	6.4oz raisins
century)	3.2ozs suet
	1½ozs tea

(H) The Board of Trade Scale, 1868⁴

1. Salt beef (or pork, fresh meat, preserved meat, bouilli

-
1. Candidate's collection.
 2. BPP 1867 LXIV 416.
 3. Candidate's collection. This scale is based on the issue of rations to five-man messes - hence the decimal quantities per head - and can be dated to around 1866.
 4. BPP 1867-68 LXIII 168-169. This was the scale arrived at from the suggestions of Dr. Walter Dickson and Mr. Harry Leach and put out by Thomas Gray.

- and soup) - from 1lb (preserved meat) to 1½lbs (salt beef) daily.
2. 1½lbs fresh bread or ¾lb biscuit daily.
 3. 1lb fresh potatoes daily, or between ½lb and 1lb dried vegetables weekly.
 4. 2lbs flour weekly and ½ pint split peas weekly, with alternatives of ½lb rice, barley or oatmeal for the latter
 5. ½lb butter or suet weekly.
 6. 1lb sugar or 2lb molasses weekly.
 7. ½lb of currants, raisins, prunes or dried apples weekly.
 8. Condiments, including 1oz mustard weekly.
 9. Small quantities of tea, coffee and cocoa.
 10. Lime juice - as the Act directs.
 11. ½ pint vinegar weekly.
 12. Intoxicants - at master's discretion.
 13. 1½ gallons of water daily - 1 gallon for drinking and cooking: remainder for washing.

(1) Board of Trade statutory scale of 1906¹

4 quarts of water daily, 3lbs of soft bread and 4lbs biscuit weekly. Other weekly amounts: 3 lbs salt beef, 2 lbs salt pork, 2½lbs preserved meat, ¾lb fish, 6 lbs potatoes, ½lb dried vegetables, $\frac{2}{3}$ pint split peas, $\frac{1}{3}$ pint green peas, $\frac{1}{3}$ pint haricot beans. 2lbs flour, ½lb rice, ½lb oatmeal, 1½ozs tea, 4oz coffee, 1½lbs sugar, $\frac{1}{3}$ lb con-

1. First Schedule to the Merchant Shipping Act, 1906.

densed milk, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb butter, 1lb jam or marmalade, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb syrup or molasses, 4oz suet, $\frac{1}{2}$ pint pickles, 5oz dried fruits, 2oz salt, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz mustard, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz pepper, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz curry powder, 3oz onions.

Rations to be "reasonably distributed" throughout the week, and biscuit to be supplied in place of soft bread in vessels under 1,000 tons in rough weather. Substitutes - fish in place of preserved meat,¹ and preserved meat in place of pork in the tropics. Stokers to get additional oatmeal, and an extra quart of water each day.

1. Only up to $\frac{1}{2}$ lb by weight.

APPENDIX TWELVERANKS ABOARD SHIP

	<u>BRITISH</u>	<u>LASCARS</u>
(a) Deck		
	Bosun	Serang
	Bosun's Mate	Tindal
	Quartermaster	Seacunny
	Carpenter	Mistree
	Lamptrimmer	Kussab
	Able Seaman	First Class Lascar
	Ordinary Seaman	Second Class Lascar
(b) Engineroom		
	Donkeyman	Serang ¹
	-	Tindal ²
	Apprentice	Topas
(c) Saloon		
	Second Steward	Butler ³
(d) Catering		
	Cook	Bhandary

-
1. In larger vessels, such as those of P & O, there was a European Donkeyman and the Serang was a separate, but equal, petty officer.
 2. No equivalent. The Storekeeper, who would normally be next in line to the Donkeyman, was invariably a European. The Tindal usually controlled the day-workers and stood his watch with the Chief Engineer from 0800 to noon and 2000 to midnight. In large steamers there would be a Tindal for each watch, with the First Tindal working the same hours as the Chief Engineer.
 3. In smaller vessels, such as those of the Strick Line, the Butler was also Chief Steward. He had the same rights of engagement and control over Stewards as the Serangs had in the deck and engine-room departments.

APPENDIX THIRTEEN (A)Shipping losses by decades, 1841-1920¹

<u>Decade</u>	<u>Mean number of registered ships²</u>		<u>Mean number of losses</u>		<u>Mean percentage of losses³</u>	
	<u>Sail</u>	<u>Steam</u>	<u>Sail</u>	<u>Steam</u>	<u>Sail</u>	<u>Steam</u>
1841-50	23,500	1,000	518	7	2.20	0.70
1851-60	25,200	1,600	570	17	2.26	1.06
1861-70	24,400	2,600	640	38	2.62	1.46
1871-80	21,600	4,200	640	80	2.96	1.90
1881-90	17,000	6,600	500	140	2.94	2.12
1891-00	12,500	9,200	340	130	2.72	1.41
1901-10	9,900	10,500	230	110	2.32	1.01
1911-20	7,600	12,200	110	120	1.45	0.98

1. This technique employed so as to eliminate distortion caused by single cataclysmic events such as the Royal Charter gale of 1859.
2. To the nearest hundred vessels.
3. To two decimal points.

APPENDIX THIRTEEN (B)Seamen deaths by quinquenni, 1871-1920¹

<u>Years</u>	<u>Mean deaths</u>	<u>Years</u>	<u>Mean deaths</u>
1871-75	1,943	1896-1900	966
1876-80	1,593	1901-05	709
1881-85	2,053	1906-10	626
1886-90	1,259	1911-15	825
1891-95	1,356	1916-20	385

1. War deaths excluded.

(Source) BPP. Various Board of Trade returns of shipping casualties.

APPENDIX FOURTEENRate of rejection of ships' stores following inspection,
1908-14(A) Individual ships (1906 Act)

<u>Year of Inspection</u>	<u>Number of Packages Inspected</u>	<u>Packages of stores passed</u>	<u>Packages of stores rejected</u>	<u>Percentage rejected</u>
1908	1,496	386,117	11,602	3.0
1909	1,587	411,974	10,909	2.6
1910	1,520	375,734	6,292	1.7
1911	1,493	339,504	4,817	1.4
1912	1,430	340,237	3,371	1.0
1913	1,493	356,071	4,232	1.2
1914	1,328	330,173	4,069	1.2

(B) Bulk Stores (1892 and 1894 Acts)

<u>Year of Inspection</u>	<u>Number of Inspections</u>	<u>Number of rejections</u>	<u>Percentage rejected</u>
1909	4,119	108	2.6
1910	4,310	100	2.3
1911	4,752	111	2.3
1912	4,655	94	2.0
1913	4,590	101	2.2
1914	4,020	90	2.2

(Source) Annual Reports of the Chief Inspector of Ships' Provisions on PRO MT/9 1082.

APPENDIX FIFTEEN(A) Mean monthly rates of pay of seamen and firemen,
1850-1906

1

<u>Year</u>	<u>Able Seamen</u>		<u>Firemen</u>
	<u>Sail</u>	<u>Steam</u>	
1850		£2-5-0	£3-14-0
1852		£2-10-0	
1854		£3-10-0	
1855		£3-10-0	£4-4-0
1858		£2-10-0	
1860		£2-15-0	£4-2-0
1862		£2-17-0	
1864		£3-0-0	
1865		£2-17-0	£4-2-0
1866		£3-2-0	
1868		£2-15-0	
1869	£2-12-0	£3-5-0	
1870	£2-15-0	£3-5-0	£4-3-0
1872	£3-5-0	£3-15-0	
1874	£3-10-0	£4-0-0	
1875	£3-10-0	£3-15-0	£4-8-0
1876	£3-7-0	£3-17-0	
1878	£3-0-0	£3-10-0	
1880	£2-12-0	£3-5-0	£3-18-0
1882	£3-2-0	£3-15-0	£4-4-0
1884	£2-17-0	£3-12-0	£4-3-0
1885	£2-17-0	£3-10-0	£4-2-0
1886	£2-12-0	£3-5-0	£3-18-0
1888	£2-15-0	£3-7-0	£4-0-0
1890	£3-5-0	£4-5-0	£4-12-0
1892	£3-5-0	£4-4-0	£4-9-0
1894	£2-17-0	£3-15-0	£4-2-0
1895	£2-15-0	£3-15-0	£4-2-0
1896	£2-17-0	£3-15-0	£4-2-0
1898	£2-16-0	£3-19-0	£4-4-0
1900	£3-0-0	£4-2-0	£4-7-0
1902	£3-0-0	£4-1-0	£4-6-0
1904	£3-0-0	£4-0-0	£4-5-0
1905	£3-0-0	£4-0-0	£4-5-0
1906	£3-0-0	£4-0-0	£4-5-0

1. To the nearest shilling.

(Source) BPP. Various Tables showing the Progress of Merchant Shipping.

(B) 'Spot' rates of monthly pay for Able Seamen,
1824-99.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Trade</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Sail or Steam</u>	<u>Source of information</u>
1824	Coal	£4-0-0	Sail	<u>RSCCL 1825</u>
1825	Coal	£3-10-0	Sail	<u>RSCCL 1826</u>
1826	Baltic	£2-10-0	Sail	<u>RSCBS 1844</u>
1833	Baltic	£3-0-0	Sail	<u>RSCMCS 1833</u>
1833	Med.	£2-5-0	Sail	<u>RSCMCS 1833</u>
1835	Quebec	£2-10-0	Sail	<u>RSCS 1836</u>
1839	Indian	£2-10-0	Steam	Boyd Cable
1844	Baltic	£3-0-0	Sail	<u>RSCMSF 1844</u>
1847	Med.	£2-6-4	Sail	BPP 1867 LXIV 174
1848	Med.	£2-8-1	Sail	BPP 1867 LXIV 174
1849	Coasting	£2-5-0	Sail	Eames
1850	Transat'ic	£2-5-0	Sail	BT/1 479
1857	N.America	£4-0-0	Steam	BPP 1867 LXIV 175
1858	N.America	£4-0-0	Steam	BPP 1867 LXIV 175
1860	Cunard	£4-0-0	Steam	<u>RSCMS 1860</u>
1860	India	£2-10-0	Sail	<u>RSCMS 1860</u>
1861	N.America	£4-0-0	Steam	BPP 1867 LXIV 175
1865	Tyne	£5-18-0	Steam	Northway
1866	Med.	£3-1-3	Sail	BPP 1867 LXIV 175
1866	N.America	£3-16-3	Sail	BPP 1867 LXIV 175
1871	China	£2-10-0	Sail	Thermopylae's log
1872	China	£4-0-0	Sail	Thermopylae's log
1872	Quebec	£3-10-0	Sail	BPP 1873 LIX 259
1878	Tyne	£6-1-4	Steam	Northway
1886	China	£2-15-0	Sail	Crowell
1890	Coal	£4-15-0	Steam	<u>Dis. Cert. Report 1897</u>
1899	Grain	£4-0-0	Sail	Lubbock

(C) Mean monthly rates of pay for mates and petty officers at ten-year intervals, 1850-1910

<u>Rank</u>	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910
1st Mate (Sail)	£6-3-4	£7-0-0	£7-3-5	£7-5-5	£7-7-7	£7-10-0	£8-2-6
1st Mate (Steam)	£8-10-0	£9-9-0	£9-8-0	£9-9-2½	£9-8-9	£10-0-0	£10-15-0
2nd Mate (Sail)	£4-8-4	£4-19-7	£5-0-5	£5-1-5	£4-18-7	£4-15-0	£5-2-6
2nd Mate (Steam)	£5-16-8	£6-17-9½	£6-17-7	£6-14-5	£6-15-0	£7-5-0	£7-15-0
3rd Mate (Sail)	£3-0-0	£3-8-9	£3-8-0	£3-8-9	£3-11-6	£3-5-0	£3-15-0
3rd Mate (Steam)	£4-15-0	£5-5-6	£5-5-9	£5-6-3	£5-8-9	£6-5-0	£6-5-0
Bos'un (Sail)	£3-10-8	£4-1-0	£4-1-0	£4-3-5	£4-10-5		
Bos'un (Steam)	£4-5-0	£4-12-2½	£4-12-9	£4-14-0	£5-4-10		
Carpenter (Sail)	£5-0-0	£5-7-5	£5-9-2½	£5-9-9	£5-11-5		
Carpenter (Steam)	£5-10-0	£5-15-5	£5-14-9½	£5-15-5	£5-19-9½		
Sailmaker (Sail)	£3-10-0	£4-2-0	£4-3-2½	£4-5-0	£4-11-2½		
Q'master (Sail)		£3-8-4	£3-6-8	£3-5-0	£3-13-4		
Q'master (Steam)	£3-0-0	£4-0-0	£3-16-9	£3-15-6	£4-9-6		

Sources: Merchant Ships Mates and Petty Officers (Wages), BPP 1890 (309) LXVI 149 and Tables showing the Progress of Merchant Shipping.

(D) Mean monthly rates of pay for engineers, 1850-1918¹

<u>Year</u>	<u>Chief Engineer</u>	<u>Second Engineer</u>	<u>Third Engineer</u>
1850	£16-16-0	£11-13-6	£9-3-0
1855	£18-0-0	£12-6-0	£10-0-0
1860	£17-3-6	£11-13-6	£9-9-0
1865	£16-18-0	£11-12-6	£8-7-0
1870	£16-0-0	£11-5-0	£8-7-0
1875	£17-7-0	£11-9-0	£8-19-0
1880	£17-2-0	£12-13-0	£9-10-0
1882	£16-13-6	£12-3-6	£8-19-0
1884	£17-1-6	£12-13-6	£9-9-6
1885	£16-10-0	£11-12-0	£8-16-6
1886	£16-18-6	£11-12-0	£8-8-0
1888	£15-13-6	£11-13-0	£8-10-0
1890	£16-5-0	£11-10-0	£8-4-6
1892	£16-17-6	£11-13-6	£8-15-6
1894	£15-12-6	£11-2-6	£8-5-0
1895	£15-15-0	£11-2-6	£8-0-0
1896	£16-10-0	£11-10-0	£8-0-0
1898	£16-10-0	£11-15-0	£8-2-6
1900	£16-1-6	£11-7-6	£8-5-0
1902	£15-12-6	£11-7-6	£8-7-6
1905	£15-12-6	£11-5-0	£8-2-6
1906	£15-15-0	£11-0-0	£7-15-0
1908	£15-12-6	£11-0-0	£7-15-0
1910	£15-12-6	£10-17-6	£8-0-0
1912	£17-15-0		
1914	£19-0-0	£12-10-0	£10-10-0
1918	£33-5-0	£25-5-0	£21-0-0

1. To the nearest sixpence

(Source) BPP. Tables showing the Progress of Merchant Shipping.

APPENDIX SIXTEEN (A)Tonnage/Manning ratio suggested by the 1896 ManningCommittee

<u>SAIL</u>	<u>Tonnage</u>	<u>"Effective hands",¹</u>
	Under 400	9
	Under 650	13
	Under 800	15
	Under 1,200	19
	Under 2,900	30

STEAM

<u>Tonnage</u>	<u>Master</u>	<u>Mate(s)</u>	<u>Seamen</u>	<u>Bosun/ Carp.</u>	<u>Total</u>
Under 350	1	1	4		6
Under 700	1	2	5		8
Under 1,000	1	2	6		9
Under 1,500	1	2	7		10
Under 2,000	1	2	7	2	12
Under 2,500	1	3	8	2	14
Under 3,000	1	3	9	2	15

-
1. 'Effective hands' were the master, mates, carpenter, bosun, sailmaker and Able Seamen. An Ordinary Seaman counted as two-thirds of a man, as did a cook-steward. Any apprentices were to count as a third to a whole man according to sea-time and experience.

(Source) Lloyds Manning Pamphlet 1896 10-27.

APPENDIX SIXTEEN (B)

Manning ratio - the mean number of men employed
for every hundred tons of shipping registered -
covering the period 1833 to 1880

<u>Year</u>	<u>Sail</u>	<u>Steam</u>	<u>All Ships</u>	<u>Source</u>
1833	between 4 and 5 men per 100 tons			<u>RSCMCS 1833</u>
1849	4.8		4.9	<u>RSCMS 1860</u>
1854	4.2	7.5	4.4	BPP 1876 LXVI 33
1859	3.7		4.0	<u>RSCMS 1860</u>
1860	3.8	6.5	4.0	BPP 1878-79 LXIV 27
1865	3.4	5.6	3.7	BPP 1878-79 LXIV 27
1869	3.3	4.9	3.5	BPP 1876 LXVI 33
1870	3.3	4.7	3.5	BPP 1876 LXVI 33
1871	3.3	4.6	3.5	BPP 1876 LXVI 33
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